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# COMMENTARY

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Daniel Bell
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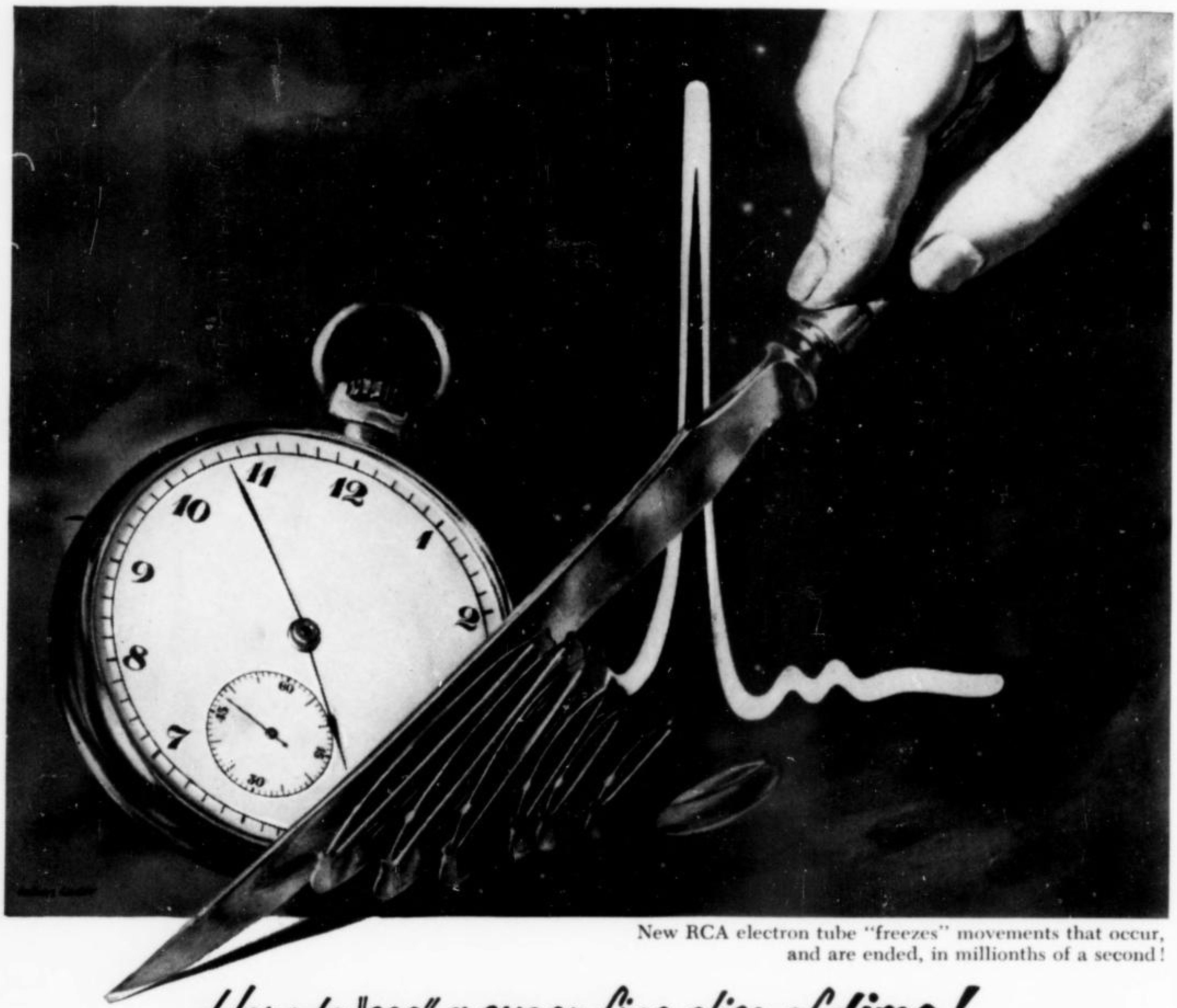

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Commentary, *incorporating Contemporary Jewish Record:* Published monthly by the American Jewish Committee. 50c a copy; $5.00 a year; 2 years, $8.00; 3 years, $10.00. Canadian and Foreign $1.00 a year additional. Offices, 34 West 33rd Street, New York 1. Re-entered as second class matter October 30, 1945 at the post office in New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1950, by the American Jewish Committee. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved by the publisher in the United States, Great Britain, Mexico, and all countries participating in the International Copyright Convention and the Pan-American Copyright Convention. Indexed in International Index to Periodicals, Magazine Subject Index, and Public Affairs Information Service.

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# COMMENTARY

**Fighting Prejudice Through Censorship** *David Riesman*

Mr. Riesman discusses the threat that comes, not from the prejudiced, but from those who, in the enthusiasm of their fight against prejudice, tend to silence all open and honest discussion.

**Simone Weil: Prophet Out of Israel** *Leslie A. Fiedler*

Since her premature death in 1943, Simone Weil's reputation has grown steadily until she has come to be regarded as one of the most significant European religious thinkers of recent decades. Leslie A. Fiedler provides a full-scale portrait of this strange woman who was born into a Jewish family and became a Christian mystic. (Simone Weil's essay, "Hitler and the Idea of Greatness," appeared in the July COMMENTARY.)

**The Story of the "Jewish Chronicle"** *Mark Raven*

The English weekly newspaper, the *Jewish Chronicle,* which recently celebrated its hundredth anniversary, constitutes a remarkable exhibit in Anglo-Jewish journalism. What does the *Chronicle* tell us of the life of the Jews in England? What created its characteristic tone and led to its success? Does it provide any lessons for Jewish journalism elsewhere?

**1001 Yiddish Nights** *William and Sarah Schack*

The fabulous early days of the Yiddish theater, one of the lustiest and—some would say—most graceless of the offspring of the Jewish Enlightenment.

**Miss O'Keefe's Children** *Shlomo Katz*

A memoir of a schoolteacher in St. Paul, Minnesota, and her extraordinary experiences in inducting a class of immigrant children into the mysteries of the New World. In the department, "From the American Scene."

**Wiechert: Portrait of a "Good German"** *Alfred Werner*

The poet Ernst Wiechert is among those few German thinkers who remained in their homeland throughout the years of Hitler's rule and yet can truthfully claim to have given neither aid nor comfort to the Nazis. Born in aristocratic East Prussia, Wiechert embodies the virtues—and shortcomings—of German conservatism.

**Jewish Tradition and the Jewish Writer** *Jacob Sloan*

A discussion of the ways in which the creative writer of today can fruitfully refer himself to the Jewish tradition, and the ways in which the tradition makes use of the writer.

COMMENTARY

## FRANCE'S HOMELESS LEFT

### *The Slow Awakening from the Communist Dream*

### HERBERT LÜTHY

PARIS

BETWEEN the totalitarian fortress of the French Communist party and an untenanted liberal-socialist house of cards in which the remnants of the "third force" have been trying to set up housekeeping, there lies a vast no-man's-land in which the groups and grouplets of the French Left wander about in search of a position. Everyone feels that this search is important, whether it is formulated negatively as an endeavor to break through the Communist blockade between working class and nation, or positively as an endeavor to provide a solid foundation for French democracy, which today reminds one of Munchausen hanging in midair by his own pigtail.

FRANCE is the land of radicalism: of liberty, fraternity, and equality; it is also a land whose intellectuals have always prided themselves on their logic. Yet even a casual reading of the French press and French periodicals reveals the mental processes of the non-Communist French Left as devious to the point of the fantastic—a fact which has some relation to the ability of the Communists to get one-third of the popular vote at the last election. What explains the confusion of the French Left? HERBERT LÜTHY, who here tries to answer that question, is a young Swiss journalist whose writings on French politics have attracted considerable attention in Europe. He was born in Basel in 1918 and studied at the Universities of Paris, Geneva, and Zurich. He is the author of studies on Swiss economic and contemporary European history. This article has been translated from the German by Ralph Manheim.

It is true that the political stagnation in France largely reflects a protracted economic and social stagnation. To turn this proposition about, however, and assert that a gradual economic recovery would automatically provide an exit from the present political and ideological impasse, is a gross oversimplification. A path of return from the never-never-land of millennial promises and apocalyptic fears to the banality of daily work and daily politics is long and difficult when ideologies have congealed into warring churches and institutions. Admittedly, faiths have become lukewarm; even the Communist rank and file, though they still vote for the party, pay their dues with reluctance and have ceased to march in parades. This situation opens up innumerable possibilities of muddling through. But it does not solve the basic problem of a democracy in which a third of the electorate professes Communism (if only with the ballot, and as a gesture of dissatisfaction); while another third, in reaction to the Communists, has ceased to believe in democracy as a possibility and clamors for a savior in the form of "the General" de Gaulle or the police. The remaining political third is represented by parties which are far too busy with the thankless task of bolstering up a regime without a popular majority, holding it together by every known kind of intrigue and horse trade, to exert any possible force of attraction or inspiration.

It seems obvious that the only hope of saving democracy from the threat of a Communist police state lies in the formation of a new democratic Left—or at least of a Left that is not a fifth column of the Soviet totalitarian state. At the same time, a broader, more representative democracy cannot be achieved without the participation of the workers who are today shut up in the Communist "ghetto." But none of the parties that now uphold the present regime of makeshifts, and that fear to abandon it because of its very feebleness, can act as a rallying point, or provide the disgruntled Communists-in-spite-of-it-all with an answer to the question: "Where should we go?" Or even to the question: "Whom else can we vote for?" To create a party with such an answer is the secret or open aspiration of all the various groups and grouplets of the Left.

THESE organizations of the non-Communist Left live by the idea that they are merely an advance guard of the "homeless left-wing masses" who dwell in the Communist party as in exile, and stay there merely because they "do not know where else to go." Their power of attracting the Communist rank and file is the criterion by which all these groups judge themselves and by which others judge them—and in terms of which they have all thus far failed. Just as there is more joy in heaven over a repentant sinner than over ninety and nine righteous men, there is (or would be) more joy in any of these groups over a single repentant Communist than over ninety and nine other proselytes, who "wouldn't be Communists anyway."

This approach is perhaps one main reason for all contradictions and failures. The unhappy fact is that the homeless Left has begun its mission to the heathen while it is still in search of a faith for itself. While no one would cast doubt on the sincerity of their quest, these non-Communist Left groups too often seem to be chiefly concerned with finding something which would permit them to compete with Communist opinion in the minds of the people. But all of them can offer nothing to compete with the most powerful ingredient of the Communist opium: the hypnotic prestige of Soviet power. Moreover, in their eagerness to break into the Communist ranks, the Left groups often fail to dissociate themselves from Communism. The result is a strange phenomenon: the Communist bloc exerts a simultaneous attraction and repulsion which makes the choreography of the homeless Left as complicated and difficult to describe as a swarm of gnats dancing around a street lamp.

The metaphor is not exaggerated: at first glance the seething and swarming of the leftists in the Paris laboratory seems utterly without meaning. Each group speaks—directly to the masses, of course—and no one listens; many banners with few followers. Often we have a grouplet with less than ten members, making impressive sacrifices to publish a theoretical organ which the whole membership peddles on Sundays. After our grouplet has enrolled its first hundred members, it begins with appalling solemnity to discuss the problem of the seizure of power: united front or general strike? Over this question it splits into two bitterly hostile groups, each with a theoretical organ of its own, each jealously guarding the flame of the one true socialism. Much of this activity can hardly be regarded as political, but rather comes under the heading of club activities. The collector of curios may note with awe the survival of a small group still faithful to the principles of the First International.

In the whirl of all these particles, we can at best discern certain main groupings which have long since ceased to be coherent movements, but which still betray their diverse origins by their varying reactions to the Communists.

FIRST of all, we have the various opposition groups which the Communist party itself discarded during its evolution from a revolutionary movement to the Russian state party, beginning with the Trotskyists, and ending with Titoists or *Titistes* as they are called in France. They have the sectarian spirit of genuine heretics, invoking the true doctrine and the primitive purity against the Stalinist degeneration, and essentially interpreting their battle with the Communist party as an attempt to correct an error. Their burning ambition in the first postwar years was to unmask the counter-revolutionary trend of the Communists, to spur them on to a violent seizure of power, to turn the Communist strike maneuvers into a revolutionary general strike, in short, to act as the Leninist conscience of the Communist leadership. During the clumsy, zigzagging transition of the Communist party from loyal participation in the government to total obstruction (1946-47), the little Trotskyist party, hitherto totally insignificant, achieved for a short time a certain stature as a political nuisance. Since 1948 it has almost ceased to exist as an institution, but, as an intellectual leaven, Trotskyism has retained its importance.

Far more numerous are the splinters constantly being torn away from the Socialist party. While many of these splinters were considerable at the time of their withdrawal from the unfortunate mother party, by now it is usually hard to trace their whereabouts. For lack of ideological uniform, the troops tend to lose themselves in the political countryside, and all that can be found are little dissident bands offering no more than an illusion of political existence. Many of these bands, having left the Socialist party out of an unsatisfied thirst for action, succumbed almost inevitably to the attraction of the Communist mass party. The lower cadres of Marceau Pivert's Socialist Workers and Peasants party, which split off from the Socialist party shortly before the Second World War, largely fell into Communist catch-all organizations during the war, while the leaders, beginning with Marceau Pivert himself, returned more or less empty-handed to the old Socialist party. Beginning in 1947, there was a new wave of splits from the Socialist party; in the summer the Socialist Youth, which was shot through with Trotskyists, was expelled, and was soon followed by a group led by former party secretary Dechezelles; in the following winter the "Bataille Socialiste" faction, advocating a Socialist-Communist united front, declared its independence under the ominous name—for those conscious of the German experience—of Socialist Unity party. Since then it has loyally played its part as a come-on for the Communist united front, though recently, because of Trotskyist infiltration, it has come under suspicion of Titoism. Closely akin to this Socialist Unity party are the "non-partisan" groups in the backwash of the Communist party, particularly the Republican Resistance Union around Pierre Cot, the Comte de Chambrun, and Professor Rivet; this group leads a purely parliamentary existence as a reservoir of future Fierlingers, predestined puppets for the Communists.

It is with some hesitation that we consider the Left Catholic organizations along with the splinter groups gravitating round the two large parties, the Communists and Socialists. The Catholic organizations spring from an entirely different tradition and have at least this advantage: they are not congenitally burdened with complexes growing out of their relation to the Communist party. The very existence and recognition of a religious Left is in France—where, for the last century, leftism has been identified with anticlericalism and hostility to religion—a revolutionary development. Despite their numerical weakness, the socialist wings of the National Republican Movement and of the Christian unions have in the past year been the only consistent counterweight to the Communists and perhaps the most important source of strength in the disintegrating Left. Associated with these, but at an increasing distance from the earth, is a whole hierarchy of groups, including the "Jeune République," founded in 1900 as a pure embodiment of political idealism, the Personalistic groups around the late Emmanuel Mounier's magazine, *Esprit*, and the forlorn little Union of

Progressive Christians which, on the basis of a neo-Thomist division between the spiritual and the secular, assigns the hereafter to God but the life of this world to Stalin.

This rough division of the Left into three groups—dissident Communist, former Socialist, and Left Catholic—leaves out of consideration a large number of more or less anarchistic "movements" the mere listing of which would require a book. The Resistance, that hotbed of apocalyptic notions, threw a whole new generation of Left politicals of every kind into the arena, men obligated to none of the old "schools"; above all, it inextricably confounded all the groups and turned the postwar career of the French Left into a history of personal turns and shifting associations. It is always the same six or eight dozen names that, in constantly changing combinations, figure in the manifestoes of the independent Left. Because these men's names are familiar to us from appearing in so many manifestoes, the names achieve a spurious political significance, and we mistake their moves about the political scene for changes in the political scene itself. Again one is reminded of the swarming gnats round a lamp.

As an example of a career of this sort, here is the story of a man remarkable neither for his intelligence nor his personality, but who somehow always manages to publish his editorials in a significant spot; a typical figure of the homeless Left. In his youth Marcel Fourrier was a member of the Communist party. Before the war he went over to a revolutionary opposition group bearing the symbolic name "Que Faire?" and thence passed to the Socialist party, which he left again in 1947 with the "Bataille Socialiste" group. Soon he moved into the editorial offices of a "progressive" daily of the Communist type, where he continued to fight staunchly for the unity of the Left. However, like most Socialist champions of unity, he recently has fallen under suspicion of Titoism—and here the whole cycle might well begin over again.

In all these shifts we can discern no trace of any change of outlook, and this is what is so typical. In all the writings of this editorialist, not a line reveals the slightest awareness that behind the slogans there might be some problems; from Communist, dissident Communist, Socialist, and again Communist platforms, Marcel Fourrier has always imperturbably repeated the same classical platitudes, which are the common heritage of the Left, the principles of 1789 and 1848: the people and the oppressors, the Republic and laicism, the revolution and the rights of man, freedom, equality, fraternity, socialism, and democracy. He has never felt the slightest need for precision. Fourrier's style is one in which every leftist audience feels at home without intellectual effort; one might call it the style of revolutionary quietism.

In somewhat higher regions, things do become more problematic. The shaky career of the newspaper *Combat,* which in recent years was the liveliest organ of the Left intelligentsia, is a case in point. It still carries the subtitle: "From Resistance to Revolution," and its first legal number in August 1944 defined—or promised to define—this latter concept:

"In the days to come we shall define the word revolution by our articles and our acts. But for the moment our sense of energy and honor, our resolution, will be satisfied if we break with the spirit of mediocrity, with the power of money, and with a state of society in which the ruling class has betrayed all its duties and revealed a lack both of intelligence and of heart. Our endeavor is to realize without delay a true people's and workers' democracy."

In the "days to come" *Combat* proceeded by devious ways to "define" revolution. Beginning with the "socialist humanism" of Camus and Malraux, it sailed the waters of the post-Resistance with Raymond Aron and Albert Olivier, one of whom has since become a member of the Gaullist national council, the other an editor of the Gaullist party organ. It ran aground for a short time in 1947 on the desolate shoals of official Socialism. Then, restored to solvency by M. Smadja, a Tunisian businessman, it embarked under the guidance of Claude Bourdet—who in 1947 had founded the "Socialisme et Liberté" group and the magazine *Octobre* in collaboration with Henri Frenay—upon a long unreciprocated flirtation with the Communist party, until M. Smadja had his belly full and Bourdet was "stabbed in the back" by Frenay. But in order to live on, and to keep in touch with its more or less imaginary readership, the paper had to "keep left" somehow, and in his search for a really non-Communist Left group with literary gifts, M. Smadja found the Surrealists. They made *Combat* a very amusing, if not politically very serious, organ of St. Germain-des-Prés and the Quartier Latin.

In an even more problematic, if rarefied, atmosphere, the two well-known intellectual magazines, *Esprit* and *Les Temps Modernes,* revolve on the axes of their respective philosophies, Personalism and Existentialism. Both of them, one with an impressive and often discouraging integrity of effort anchored in religious faith, the other with dazzling wit, have for years been creating infinite confusion.

*Esprit* until recently clung, with certain reservations, to the view that "history is moving in the direction of Communism," that "anti-Communism" is accordingly a sin against the Spirit, and that the only positive program consisted in an effort to "transcend Communism" with the Communists. But it seems at last to have found a way out of the Kremlin-Wall Street dualism—via the detour, rather odd for an organ devoted to the Spirit, of Marshal Tito, whose eruption from the Stalinist front has provided the Manicheans of all countries with a unique escape from their dilemma.

In contrast, according to a law of uneven development that seems to be the only law governing the movements of this sector of the Left, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, after years of skirmishing against subaltern Communist scribes, have discovered Marxism in the pages of *Les Temps Modernes.* Marxism does not seem to have gained greatly in the process. From a method of social criticism, it would appear to have developed into a system of messianic postulates rotating abstractly on their own axis: since Marxist prophecy posits as the total aim of History the world revolution that will make the proletariat into a "universal class" and realize the concept of Humanity, this prophecy must be fulfilled—or else, "by definition," History is meaningless.

"Whether the slaves, in expropriating the masters, are transcending the alternative of slavery or domination, is another question. But if this development did not occur, it would not mean that the Marxist philosophy of History would have to be replaced by another: it would mean that there is no History. . . . Outside of Marxism there is nothing but the violence of the one group and the submission of the other. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Essai sur le Communisme.*)

How the virgin comes by this child, how the Existentialist philosophy of the absurd arrives at this total "teleology of History," can be understood only as a miracle of sudden illumination. As he shows by operating with such absolute brickbats as "masters and slaves" as a substitute for any differentiated sociology, Merleau-Ponty has taken over the Marxist eschatology, but nothing of its method as a critique of history and society, and the result is a mere thinking in slogans. From Marx he has learned the contrary of what Marx taught: to regard not what people do but only what they say. In his inexorable view, all earthly forms of state and society are tainted with the same imperfection—"The Russians have not introduced free elections everywhere [!]; but what are we to say of the Greek elections?"—and for him there is no such thing as a question of degree. Guided by the standard of the ideological absolute, we must support, not those who attempt to realize an attainable measure of freedom, prosperity, and human dignity, but those whose official state philosophy supports the absolute truth of Marxist prophecy, regardless of how their regimes may look in practice. Reality cannot be our criterion, for all reality is wretched; we must judge by the promise, even if it is only a mystification.

According to this way of thinking, the

Soviet Union is the land of the total promise, the United States at best the land of mere proximate realization. How can a Marshall Plan outweigh the promise of a "new Humanity"—even when this Humanity is to arise from a mountain of corpses? This is especially true when the Marshall Plan is seen in simple Marxist terms as an escape valve for American capitalism. There is an almost unbelievable ignorance of historical actuality at the root of the French Left's political valuations, and this ignorance most tragically reveals how characteristically provincial the French political cosmos has become since the mission of France can no longer be identified with the mission of humanity, and how national pride has been transformed into paranoia. The respectfulness toward the Soviet Union does not contradict this chauvinism: the French have never been able to understand the Russian Revolution as anything other than a Robespierrian triumph, a reaffirmation under unfavorable circumstances of the French revolutionary spirit. America, however—and except for a small elite this opinion holds true in England, too—has remained a strange land, because it cannot be defined by a handful of familiar principles; "capitalism" has become the ersatz-definition of America. The conversion of ignorance about America to hostility to America is explained by the fact that the pressure of technological and social change upon France's archaic economic and social structure is felt mainly as a pressure of America upon Europe.

TRANSLATED into practice, this attitude has resulted in the solemn dismissal of David Rousset from the staff of *Les Temps Modernes* and his public denunciation by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. It is true, say the two masters, that in Soviet Russia one-tenth of the working population is being worked to death in "corrective camps"; and they go so far as to wonder "on what basis we may still speak of socialism in connection with the Soviet Union"; nevertheless, Rousset, with his campaign against the concentration camps, has "gone over to the enemy." For:

"Assuredly we see the illusions of the present-day Communists. But these very illusions forbid us to equate Communism and fascism. . . . It is true that these ideas have a disloyal champion in Communism as it is today, and that they serve the present Communists more as eyewash than as an inspiration. . . . [But] we have the same values as a Communist. . . . He has values in spite of himself. We may think that he desecrates them by embodying them in present-day Communism. Nevertheless, they are our values, whereas we have nothing whatever in common with the many opponents of Communism."

And, finally, the two masters of Existentialism feel, quite mistakenly, that they are still far enough from the firing line to indulge in "common illusions" about the Communist reality:

"The farther we travel geographically and politically from the Soviet Union, the more we find Communists who are human beings just like us. . . ."

In reality these thinkers have traveled far from the Soviet Union in the last few years. Today Sartre and Merleau-Ponty accept "faults" in the Soviet system that two or three years ago they would have denied as diabolical inventions of Goebbels' propaganda machine. And even if they persist in thinking not in realities but in definitions, they have nevertheless taken cognizance of realities that contradict certain of their definitions. Perhaps even today the truths which they reluctantly acknowledge weigh more heavily in the balance than the definitions they uphold against their better judgment. There is even reason to hope that in time their thinking will progress even further—if history leaves them time.

IN A few great moments, the whole homeless Left has banded together in broad movements. This first occurred in the enthusiasm of the liberation, when the Mouvement de Libération Nationale briefly rallied the whole non-Communist Resistance around a program of thoroughgoing social and political reforms. With its three hundred thousand members and innumerable publications, the

MLN appeared to be the great new power in French politics. "If we wish to maintain this mobilization of energies, we must accept a technique similar to that of the Communists, i.e., we must observe within our own movement as great a discipline as do the Communists, with all the heroism, ruthlessness, and hardship which this implies," said André Malraux in January 1945, at the decisive meeting of the MLN, which rejected a Communist proposal of complete fusion. Malraux himself took this way of discipline and ruthlessness and it led him to the Rassemblement of General de Gaulle. Others traveled by parallel ways to the Communist party. The rest tried to make contact with the Socialists but found closed doors: the inertia of a party machine dominated by "old comrades" and old slogans resisted any incursion of new blood or new ideas. Today under the name of the Union of Social Democratic Resistance, the original movement survives as a parliamentary group. It includes members who have followed Malraux to Gaullism, and others who support the government coalition of the "third force"; but as a whole it has become the junior partner of the venerable Radical Socialist party, which is itself divided into a Gaullist and a pro-government faction.

IN THE fall of 1947 the Cominform was founded and carried the "cold war" to France. Again the homeless Left was compelled to reconsider its attitude toward Communism and democracy. It was then that Léon Blum devised the formula of the "third force," whose political calvary need not be described here: it was the calvary of every mere policy of the lesser evil. But the "third force" slogan, which for a moment had kindled men's hearts, is still with us. The manifesto with which, some months later, in the *crise de conscience* which followed the collapse of democracy in Czechoslovakia, an organization called the Democratic Revolutionary Rally made its first public appearance, was an extremist formulation of the need for a new middle road:

"Millions of us in France, Europe, and the whole world, are seeking the same road . . . a road between the putrefaction of capitalist democracy, the weaknesses and faults of a certain brand of Social Democracy, and the Stalinist form of Communism. We believe that a union of free men in revolutionary democracy can give new life to the principles of freedom and human dignity, by combining them with the struggle for social revolution. . . . Workers and free men of all lands, unite!"

This movement was launched by the widely read newspaper *Franc-Tireur,* which hitherto had stuck to the Communists through thick and thin, and which in workers' circles had been regarded as a "more intelligent supplement to *l'Humanité.*" Now it underwent a sort of palace revolution which triumphed over such stubborn fellow-travelers as Fourrier (who left *Franc-Tireur* for a new Communist-following organ, *Libération*). David Rousset and Jean-Paul Sartre, and such a lone wolf as André Breton, lent their patronage; *Combat, Esprit, Les Temps Modernes* supported it, the left wing of the Socialist party, the majority of the Trotskyist group, Dechezelles' Socialist Youth, "Jeune République," and many smaller groups joined in—the whole homeless Left seemed to have found its party. A series of intellectually brilliant manifestoes aroused international interest. Young people who felt that there was no place for them in the existing parties attended meetings and discussion groups all over France. Pacifist sentiment was mobilized around the popular figure of the world citizen Garry Davis, seriously embarrassing the "peace" propaganda of the Communists. The trade union crisis provoked by the Communist machine even created for the first time a basis for "mass action": in Lyons, Paris, and other cities, "revolutionary democrats" formed an action committee out of the various dissident trade union groups, though to be sure it disintegrated after the Communist trade union league expelled those who had broken discipline.

In the winter and spring of 1948, the movement seemed to be at its zenith. Then came summer, the dead season of France's political life. And when the members and sympathizers returned from their vacations, the movement had disappeared without any obituary notice. Jean-Paul Sartre, who had discovered Marxism, quarreled with David Rousset, who had already left Marxism behind him; *Combat* had become the organ of the non-orthodox Communist intelligentsia; Garry Davis had withdrawn into his meditations—in short, nothing remained, and in the end everyone realized that a glittering soap bubble had burst. The movement's dual endeavor, scarcely conscious and yet recognizable both in its manifesto and its name, to give the "masses" both more revolutionary slogans and more democratic manners than the Communists, had amounted to nothing more than a brilliant feat of vaudeville magic.

But the experiment was not entirely in vain. It did break through the sectarianism of the groups and grouplets of the Left, it lifted barriers, created contacts between people who had hitherto looked upon one another as enemies—Socialists, Trotskyists, Christian Socialists, and other dissidents—and these contacts survived the demise of the organization. It gave many young people, who for the first time had taken the step from political thinking to practical political activity, a feeling for the intractability of reality, for the impossibility of conjuring up a political force by mere ideology, for the inertia inherent in every organization, and perhaps some understanding of the political responsibility which the "third force" parties, the Socialists and Popular Republicans, so bitterly need. It provided new democratic forces with a beginning of political training. For beneath the chaotic political surface, the hope lies in those who still have no name and no platform from which to speak. But, like other stirrings beneath the stagnant film of French political life, this must be regarded as a hope far more than a force.

ON THE surface nothing has changed. The searching youth and the countless workers who are becoming increasingly aware that the Communist machine is using them for ulterior purposes can expect little leadership from the present masters of simple leftist "doublethink." If not for the similar bankruptcy on the Right, we might speak of a bankruptcy on the Left.

But what *is* the Left? Obviously there is something wrong with the whole frame of reference. We tend to regard "Left" as a direction, but instead we find a condition. In this old country, whose social structure has become almost congealed, "Left" does not mean a vision of the future but a tradition, hence a past. It might be most accurate to say that France is "Left." Except for a few carry-overs from the *ancien régime,* who look upon the last hundred and fifty years of history as a deplorable mistake—and, it must be admitted, adduce some good reasons for this opinion—there is scarcely anyone in France who owns to being on the political Right; the extreme Right grudgingly admits to being "moderate." The party which is conservative in the truest sense, which is the guardian of every moth-eaten tradition, proudly calls itself the Radical Socialist party.

"Left" are all those who profess the national tradition of the Great Revolution of 1789; "Left" is the "Republic," for whose defense the most conservative bourgeoisie on the Continent has always known how to rally the whole country; "Left" is the bourgeoisie itself, which through Revolution, Directorate, Empire, and all the convulsions that followed, has expanded its political leadership and the economic monopolies that went with it, and which has successfully defended its privileges against "reaction" ever since; "Left" is the peasantry which has stubbornly defended the land seized by its revolutionary ancestors, against the enemies of the day before yesterday, against the church and feudal overlords, and which in its most opulent villages has persistently and solidly voted for the parties of the "Left"; "Left" are the elementary school teachers, a decisive element in the political sociology of France, for it is they who transmit the tradition from generation to generation; and radically "Left," it goes without saying, are those classes to which the Revolution has given little more than enthusiasm for revolution. "We are the sons of 1789, our holiday is the Fourteenth of July, our anthem is the Marseillaise"—thus did Léon Say, first finance minister of the Third Republic, open one of his election campaigns amid the shadiest of financial dealings. Even Bonapartism is "Left," insofar as Napoleon was the heir of the Revolution and, in the opinion at least of the school system, its culmination; the enthusiasms of the Gaullists are nourished from the same springs as those of the Communists.

"The Revolution is all one bloc," said Clemenceau: the September murders, the revolutionary tribunals, the guillotine as a national cult, the *Loi des suspects,* the terror, are as much a part of it as the Rights of Man. Recently we have seen the aged rationalist Julien Benda joined with Jacques Duclos in defending the democratic justice of the Rajk trial in Budapest. His mumbled words did not make it clear whether Benda, who during the trial happened to be on vacation in the Puszta as the guest of the Hungarian government, had any opinions on the circumstances and purpose of the trial. The audience at the meeting seemed rather ill at ease when for some unfathomable reason he recalled that as a young man he had fought for justice against *raison d'état* in the Dreyfus case. But though he plainly had no idea of the issues involved, he eagerly availed himself of the occasion to confront the "lachrymose sentimentalists of the West" with the old Jacobin truth that "democracy is justified in practicing terror in self-defense"; and apparently, after harboring this profound thought for a sufficient number of years, he has come to regard terror as the distinguishing feature of true militant democracy. Thus can revolutionary formulas, grown senile after a long career in the realm of pure rhetoric, suddenly gain a new lease on life and go berserk.

THE French socialists have never critically examined and digested the history of those years in the late 18th century which shook the world, but have used it merely as an arsenal of revolutionary images which have seldom had any bearing on the actual needs and potentialities of the country, and yet could generally be counted on to arouse French audiences to a fine frenzy of retrospective emotion and enthusiasm.

It is significant that the word "democracy," unlike "Republic," has never gained true popularity in France: the Jacobin tradition is republican but not democratic, let alone liberal. And indeed French democrats have never achieved that minimum of respect for their opponent, of serious objective discussion, of moderation in tone, which characterizes political life in England, for example; in compensation they possess the armor of skepticism which every Frenchman opposes to the irresponsible exaggerations of political rhetoric.

The political ferment of the Revolution was poured off into bottles and labeled. The whole system of classification—Left, moderate Left, extreme Left—has relevance to a parliamentary seating arrangement and to nothing else. In England, where majority and opposition do not sit side by side but sit facing one another, the system is still an unassimilated import from the Continent: even today an Englishman does not usually stand to the "right" or "left" of a measure or a party, he is for or against it. In short, the whole terminology in which the French Left moves and defines itself is at best a guide to a parliamentary ceremonial.

But a new phenomenon had disrupted this ceremonial and this frame of reference: the party of the "extreme Left," which occupies nearly a third of the benches in the French parliament, is actually no parliamentary party and is not of the Left; it is the representative of a foreign state and a foreign state form. It does not, of course, renounce the psychological advantages traditionally conferred by the label "extreme Left," but on the other hand it does not take the label seriously: "The concepts of Left and Right are outmoded," Thorez declared long ago, revealing a profounder insight than all those Left intellectuals who were attempting to "transcend Thorez on the Left." Soviet Russia is situated not to the Left, but to the East. The working class is not Left, but has needs which can be satisfied, combated, abused, or exploited. The Communist party does not play the "Left" game, except with marked cards. And this makes the game itself impossible.

Formerly, the continuous leftward movement of the French Republic was like an endless chain, running around a fixed point to which it gave an appearance of movement: new leftists kept entering the government and once in power became transmuted into good conservatives (". . . But the finance minister must be conservative," added Léon Say to the revolutionary campaign speech we have quoted above), whereupon a new Left formed an opposition against them, and so on *ad infinitum.* But now the endless chain has struck a snag in the "extreme Left": the Communist party does not "move," it gives birth to no new Left opposition. Meanwhile the governing Left is worn down by power, and the whole system is disorganized. The swarming little movements of the "democratic revolutionary Left" are striving once more to build a Left opposition whose Jacobin ideology is compatible with democratic practice. They refuse to admit that the two were compatible only by way of mystification, and that today, with a Communist mass machine in France and the Red Army on the Elbe, they are not compatible even by way of mystification.

THE only way that still lies open to the democratic Left is to abandon revolutionary mystification. It is a hard way, and the deep-seated French skepticism toward the radical words in which a more than moderate day-to-day policy drapes itself helps but little: it is only the reverse side of a staunch adherence to pure, abstract "principles" which are assiduously safeguarded from practice, since "politics is always a dirty business." A vast display of revolutionary convictions goes hand in hand with an absolute contempt for the practicable, and particularly for what has been actually realized, which measured by absolute criteria can never, of course, be satisfactory; and this basic attitude is not conducive to the constructive effort without which no democracy is possible. In his excommunication of Rousset, Sartre levels this attack against "our American friends":

"The phenomena of exploitation all over the world represent for them only scattered problems, which can be examined and solved one after another. They no longer have any political idea."

For a political idea which does not solve all the problems at one stroke lies far below the dignity of a Left philosopher. A political idea which is no total vision and is not, either patently or in its tacit consequences, a totalitarian ideology, does not deserve to be called an "idea."

And in this Sartre reflects the traditional mentality of the French Left. Isolated reforms and gradual progress have no charm. This attitude allowed to be created in France a dyed-in-the-wool capitalism of cartels, of prices and profits guaranteed by the state, of reserved markets, of low wages, low production, low consumption, in short, of planned stagnation. This economy of stagnation, which can equally well be regarded as a caricature of socialism as of capitalism, presents no "Left" or "Right" problems: wherever the inertia is overcome, whether by state intervention or private initiative, whether by planned investment or competition, the abolition of protectionism, European economic pacts, technological modernization, or an upward turn of the population curve, a true revolution is under way. This rich country needs little more than a release from the paralysis of anxious egoisms in order to enter upon a new expansion. And it is actually headed in that direction, if only time enough remains. Then perhaps "progressive thinkers" will catch up with progress—but as followers, hardly as leaders.

# HUMAN MORALITY AND THE NAZI TERROR

## *The Problem of the "Useless Mouths"*

### L. POLIAKOV

THOUGH full equality is a mirage or a hope for the future, the problem of human equality in the face of famine had long ceased to confront Western society until it was raised again in all its nakedness by the Nazi terror in Europe. What is to be done when there is not enough to eat for everybody—when there is not even half, not even a quarter enough for a given collectivity? Should all be allowed to die slowly of starvation, or should an elite group be established to which the others would be sacrificed?

In May of 1942, the historian E. Ringelblum, then relief director in the Warsaw ghetto, wrote in his journal: "The community kitchens do not solve the question. They prolong existence, but the end is inevitable. They prolong suffering and provide no solution, for the necessary means are lacking. Reduced to soup and dry bread, those served by the kitchens die a lingering death. The question arises whether it would not have been better in the first place to help the most socially useful people, intellectuals, and so forth; but the situation is such that we do not have enough even for a selected group; and moreover, on what grounds can we sacrifice men who were productive workers or artisans before the war and whom only the war and the ghetto have transformed into the dregs of the population, into candidates for the mass burial ground? The tragic question remains: should we administer by spoonfuls an aid insufficient to maintain life, or should we give ample aid to a very small number of the elect? . . ."

Thus the rule of the Nazis gave rise to all sorts of tragic and baffling dilemmas unknown in a normal period, situations that the most ingenious casuists would often have been unable to invent. Now, after the war, these problems continue to haunt the imagination. A French Existentialist author, Simone de Beauvoir, not long ago took up the tragic dilemma of the Warsaw Ghetto in her play: *Les Bouches Inutiles* ("The Useless Mouths"). Here the setting is a besieged city in medieval Flanders and the conflict is resolved by a desperate mass sortie; in the tragic reality of the Warsaw ghetto, the last insurgents lacked even such weapons as Simone de Beauvoir places in the hands of her heroes; their decision offered no hope of victory. The reality was far blacker than the extreme situation imagined by the Existentialist writer.

The Jews of Europe had no monopoly on such situations: yet for them the extreme situation in every conceivable form became a mass experience. And in many cases the criteria of traditional morality had ceased to be applicable. There was simply no answer. What was one to do when faced with the alternative between perfect heroism and ignominious betrayal, without the slightest possibility of a middle term, a compromise? This was how the problem of collaboration confronted the Jewish communal councils,

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THE NAZI concentration camps reduced all problems to one terrible question: Who shall survive? It was the extreme test of our moral values, and often proved them wanting. What lesson is to be drawn from the modern experience of terror? L. POLIAKOV, research director of the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine in Paris, has made an intensive study of the concentration camps, and is the author of several basic works on the Nazi treatment of Jews. He was born in Leningrad in 1910 and holds a degree in law from the Sorbonne. Mr. Poliakov's article "Eichmann: Administrator of Extermination" appeared in the May 1949 COMMENTARY. The present article, which is based on material in the archives of the Centre de Documentation, is translated from the French by Ralph Manheim.

Today nearly everyone condemns the activity of these councils, who executed the orders of the Nazis, who, to save their own lives, ran the machinery that sent their fellow Jews to Belzec and Auschwitz, who lived in opulence while the Jewish masses were starving. It is unfortunately true that the underworld was often the first to make contact with the invaders, motivated by desire for gain and concern for personal security. Nothing could be more loathsome than these traitors drawing profit from the unspeakable sufferings of the ghettos and leading manhunts carried out by members of Jewish militias. True, all of these traitors were loaded into a last freight car to share the fate of their victims; but this merely adds a note of sordid irony to the picture.

However, the situation was not always so simple. Solomon F. Bloom's masterly portrait of Chaim Rumkowski, the Jewish dictator of the Lodz ghetto (Commentary, February 1949), already shows a greater complexity. It must be admitted that once the ghettos were set up, some sort of relations had to be maintained with the holders of power. The councils were in accord with a venerable Jewish tradition of relations with the state authority, a tradition in which a number of our sages distinguished themselves in days when genocide, the word and the fact, had not yet been invented. In many places the initiative for the establishment of a Jewish council came from the Jews themselves; the most respected and most responsible leaders of the community grouped together to check the first wave of pogroms following the Nazi invasion. It was they who first sought contact with the German authorities, and were commissioned by them to set up councils. The initiators of the councils simply did not have sufficient imagination to foresee the consequences: but how many people in the whole world could have laid claim to such foresight?

When, gradually, the reality began to surpass the blackest nightmares, there were no principles to go by; no tradition, either Jewish or Western European, no categorical imperative, was applicable to such cases. The ghetto of Lodz, the first to be established, was the last to be liquidated. In the summer of 1944 when all the other ghettos in Poland had been wiped out, it was easy for Rumkowski to claim credit for the "miraculous survival" of his seventy thousand charges. More sensitive or straightforward men found no escape but suicide from similar situations: as for example Cherniakov, the president of the Jewish Council of Warsaw, who killed himself when the liquidation of the ghetto began in July 1942.

Cherniakov and dozens like him were faced with this dilemma: by choosing a number of their charges and handing them over to the SS for extermination, they could, for an indeterminate period, assure the immunity of the others (including themselves and their families). It was in a way the same problem as in *Les Bouches Inutiles*, though presented in a different way: should one sacrifice (in this case hand over to the enemy) a part of the community in order to save another part? And who was to do the choosing?

There are two passages in the Talmud which do consider conflicts of this sort. If our caravan runs out of water in the desert and only a single glass is left, I am confronted with the choice of drinking it myself or giving it to my companion. I commit no sin in saving my life by drinking it myself. "My blood is just as red as yours."

If, on the other hand, our caravan is attacked and if the enemy promises to spare our lives in return for the surrender of a single one amongst us, our duty is to defend him even if it means that we must all perish.

Thus in the face of a natural calamity I am not culpable if I choose my own welfare, while absolute solidarity is imposed upon me if I am menaced by a human hand. But these texts refer to free men, masters of their acts, capable of defending themselves—not to impotent slaves, famished and paralyzed, caught in the infernal cogs of the ghetto. Moreover, might not the Nazi menace, by its magnitude and its effects, be justifiably regarded as a natural calamity?

It must also be borne in mind that the conditions of existence in the ghetto, the hunger and anguish, the physical and moral sufferings, undermined the best balanced temperaments and clouded the clearest minds. Are we then justified in condemning on strictly ethical grounds? Consider for example the case of the young Jews to whom enlistment in the militias of the Jewish councils seemed to offer safety and food for themselves and their families. The council often consisted of decent men, and there is nothing reprehensible in the policeman's vocation as such. Thus the young Jew was enmeshed in the machine: and some months later found himself compelled to play an active role in the progressive liquidation of the ghetto. We must not forget that his family was held hostage. Worse: if his wife or other relatives had been arrested in the course of the action, he could obtain their freedom in return for the swift and singlehanded arrest of several other Jews. If on my own initiative and by my own hand, I deliver, say, twelve unknown Jews to the SS, I shall be saving the life of my mother. The trap is gross and obvious, but the moral sense has been worn down and the temptation is so great that the best of men no longer sees clearly.

In the final stage, can one speak any longer of a moral dilemma at all? For there is no freedom of choice; and without free will the moral person ceases to exist. Starvation and brutal treatment had brought the concentration camp slaves to the point where, although the physical person still dragged on a vegetative existence, the moral person was dissolved. Even in the best of the inmates the time came when nothing remained but the savage's instinct for self-preservation. The ultimate outrage inflicted by the Nazis upon men was the systematic destruction of their consciences.

OTHER conflicts of conscience arose under very different conditions. The scene of these dramas was many miles away, in free America or in neutral countries: the actors, for the most part non-Jews, were in no danger of death and were probably unaware of the profound implications of the dilemma confronting them. But here again the genocidal action of the Nazis gave rise to conflicts seemingly insoluble by the basic principles of all human morality. The events to which we are referring represent one of the least known aspects of the last war, hence a brief historical digression will be necessary.

Since the administration of the Third Reich was by no means incorruptible, a certain number of Jews managed to leave continental Europe in the course of the war by bribing officials of the SS. This bribery even began to assume mass proportions when Himmler found himself in need of money to fill the treasuries of his private armies. A report by Kaltenbrunner to Himmler on November 24, 1941, indicates that the emigration of twenty-eight Netherlands Jews had already netted the sum of 1,290,000 Swiss francs, to which 2,890,000 Swiss francs would soon be added. The report suggests that the same type of operation be extended to Slovakia, with a view to collecting the sum of thirty million Hungarian pengö needed for recruiting volunteers into the Hungarian Waffen-SS. The agent designated for this type of operation was SS-Captain Dieter Wisliceny, a Nazi crook on the grand style and an assistant of the infamous Adolf Eichmann; at this time Wisliceny was adviser on Jewish questions to the puppet government of Slovakia.

It was in Slovakia that the plan was conceived of extending the system of ransoms to the whole of Europe, and of freeing Jews from the death machine in return for dollars.

One of the moving spirits of this project on the Jewish side, Gisi Fleischmann of Bratislava, a great-hearted woman, communicated with Jews in Allied countries concerning the situation and the progress of negotiations. For it was obvious that the sums of money demanded by the Nazis were far in excess of local possibilities: many millions of dollars were needed, and only the great Jewish organizations of America, prepared to make every sacrifice for their European brothers, could provide such sums.

Here are two extracts from the reports that

Gisi Fleischmann sent regularly to Switzerland:

(March 24, 1943) ". . . unfortunately our resources are limited. But our inflexible will to achieve our ends gives us the strength and courage to go on. With our joined forces, we must do everything to achieve our sacred aim. . . ."

(June 18, 1943) ". . . I conclude this report in what is perhaps a historic moment, for your acceptance of the project opens up a possibility of halting this terrible process of extermination. If this great work of human love proves successful, we can say that we shall not have lived in vain. . . ."

But in 1943 the negotiations were still in a preliminary stage: at this time, according to Wisliceny, Himmler was skeptical about what was later designated as the "Europa-Plan." Under cover of the negotiations, however, certain concessions were nevertheless obtained for the Jews of Slovakia.

The negotiations were resumed with the military occupation of Hungary by the Nazis, in March 1944. Eichmann and Wisliceny came to Hungary in the wake of the German armies: the sadistic Eichmann was opposed to this type of negotiation, but Wisliceny, who had his own personal irons in the fire, established contact with a group of Hungarian Jews led by the Zionist leader Rezsö Kasztner. Himmler now seemed more favorably disposed, largely because the fortunes of war were inclining more and more toward the Allies. He designated a special deputy, SS-Colonel Kurt Becher, who soon replaced Wisliceny as Nazi representative in the negotiations. The Kasztner group maintained permanent contact with the representatives of the American Joint Distribution Committee in Switzerland and Portugal, with officials of the War Refugee Board, and with the Jewish Agency in Turkey; and tried to place these people in direct contact with the German negotiators. In July 1944, an interview on neutral territory was arranged. Becher was to meet Dr. Joseph M. Schwartz and Eliahu Dobkin in Lisbon. At the same time two emissaries of the Kasztner group, Joel Brandt and André György-Gross,* were authorized to leave Hungary for Istanbul, taking with them the "basis for discussion" elaborated in Budapest. The demands of the SS were clear: American dollars and trucks for Jewish lives.

PERHAPS the reader can imagine the atmosphere in which these discussions developed: his expectations will be both disappointed and surpassed, when he reads these passages from a note addressed by Kasztner to representatives of Himmler in July 1944.

". . . We believe that a first premise for the Lisbon discussions must be the suspension of deportations from Hungary, to be replaced, once an agreement is reached, by an orderly emigration of the last Jewish remnants in Hungary.

"We insist once again with the utmost urgency that the Jews already deported from Hungary be preserved from total or partial annihilation, since persons able to work represent a real value for the German economy, while those unable to work would be the first to be exchanged, and thus represent potential assets that could be rapidly realized.

"In this connection, we wish to remind you that in our last discussions it was agreed that the significance of our agreements is not solely economic. The payment to be received by you, specifically trucks, will actually constitute a saving in German blood. Thus in compensation for Jewish lives, you will be indirectly realizing a saving in German lives. Any impairment of the Jewish national substance [*sic!*] now in your hands would under these conditions, it seems to us, be a false step, entailing a deterioration of your own national substance. . . . "

Once the Jewish negotiators had thus adopted the principles of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* on man in general and the Jew in particular, the discussions could proceed. There was hard bargaining. Was a Jewish life worth four hundred dollars, or one thousand dollars? How many Jews for a truck? One hundred? And which side should make the first payments? Mutual confidence was conspicuously absent. In compensation for sums already collected, the SS had promised that a first shipment would be permitted to leave Hungary. The note states further: "In view of the total number of Jews here—six to seven hundred thousand—this shipment of sixteen hundred represents no more than a small sample. We wish to remind you that the whole of Hungarian Jewry—whether deported to Germany or still in Hungary—remains in your power as hostages for the execution of the obligations we have undertaken. . . . "

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* Brandt was an old Labor Zionist of good standing, whereas Gross appears to have been a Gestapo agent.

The shipment of the sixteen hundred—the "small sample"—actually reached Swiss territory in November 1944. Other small concessions were wrested from the SS. But the negotiations came to nothing. One can wonder what confidence could have been placed in the "good faith" of the Nazis. But in this case the obstacles arose on the Allied side.

DR. SCHWARTZ was forbidden to meet the emissary of the SS; Joel Brandt and Gross, who continued their trip to Cairo, were interned by the British authorities. No sooner had they arrived, in July 1944, than their secret mission was made public by BBC in the following terms:

"Germany Trying to Do Business with Jewish Blood—According to the Exchange Telegraph and the London Radio, two envoys of the Hungarian government have recently arrived in Turkey to submit to Allied representatives the following offers of the Gestapo and the Hungarian government: All Jews residing in Hungary will be permitted to leave the country on condition that Britain and the United States agree to furnish Hungary with a certain quantity of medical supplies and vehicles, including trucks. It has been stipulated that this material will not be used on the Western front.

"The names of the emissaries must for the moment be kept secret. The proposition has meanwhile been examined in London. In competent British circles it is regarded as a shameless attempt to weaken the Allies, whose sympathy for the Jews of Hungary is known. In official British circles it is held to be a clumsy effort to sow discord among the Allies. There is no hope that the British or American government will consider this offer, in spite of their desire to help the Hungarian Jews."

This text gives the gist of the Allied arguments: In time of war, one does not negotiate with the enemy, one avoids all measures that might be of help to him. The game was lost. Despite all the good will of the War Refugee Board, no appreciable result could be obtained. Thanks to a skilful bluff, thanks also to the deterioration in the situation of the Third Reich, the Käsztner group was able to maintain contact and obtain certain partial results, such as a slow-down in the deportations from Budapest. As time went on, Himmler was prepared for more and more concessions: in the fall of 1944 he suspended the systematic exterminations, and this may be imputed to the hopes that the Käsztner negotiations had aroused in him. But a mass rescue, the "great work of human love" of which Gisi Fleischmann had spoken, remained a forlorn dream.

THE "Europa-Plan" was merely the most ambitious of the numerous attempts to save the Jews of Europe. Nearly all these projects were nipped in the bud by the Allied authorities for reasons similar to those already cited. In his *Diaries* published last year, Henry Morgenthau tells of the Allied refusal to release blocked funds, the denial of the diplomatic pouch for transmitting information on the extermination of the Jews, and so on. In this connection, violent attacks were made on the Foreign Office and the State Department. So responsible an official as Mr. Morgenthau speaks of a "satanic combination of British chill and double-talk, cold and correct and adding up to a sentence of death," and shows no reticence in his criticism of high officials of the State Department. Other writers have spoken of cloaked anti-Semitism and it is possible that there is some truth in this. Undoubtedly, the explanation may vary with the individual case. But the true problem lies deeper.

For the reasons of the Allied authorities seem perfectly valid and logical. In time of war it is an absolute principle that nothing should be done that might increase the enemy's war potential. The delivery of trucks or medical supplies, the release of blocked funds to the enemy, would unquestionably have helped him; the mere fact of entering into negotiations, even indirectly, would have gone counter to the declared principles and aims of the war. The high officials who had thwarted the desperate efforts made to save the Jews could assure themselves that they had merely done their duty.

THEY could not suspect all the implications of their decision. For were not the contrary reasons just as valid, just as logical? In 1943 or 1944 someone had coined the phrase: "No matter how this war turns out—the Jews will lose it." Should not the impossible have been attempted in order to avoid this inevitable defeat? The traditional principles of warfare, the idea that everything should be subordinated to victory, are predicated on the assumption that the bulk of the population, the "national substance," remains intact. But in that case, did not the lives of the internal victims designated by the enemy have at least a symbolic value? From a moral point of view, what meaning could a victory have in which the most exposed, the most sacrificed ally could not participate—because he had been exterminated? Can one carry on a fight without concern with the aims for which one fights? Moreover, certain traditional rules of warfare continued to be observed even in this most cruel of wars: considerable manpower and tonnage was immobilized in the exchange of the severely wounded and of civilian internees. Should not then the Jews at any cost have been assimilated to this latter category?

Doubtless the problem raised by the Machiavellian proposals of the SS allowed of no satisfactory solution. The polemics on the subject among various Jewish organizations in the United States, all equally preoccupied with the fate of their brothers in Europe, merely illustrate the situation. Both camps were right and wrong.

WHAT conclusions shall we draw? Can we say that morality and mores have been unable to keep pace with the dizzy technological progress of our era and its immense sociological effects, and that the gap, the chasm thus created must be filled? That behind these contradictions characteristic of a time of crisis, a different world, a new morality are in the making? It is not for nothing that in devastated Europe some of the best minds, men such as Maritain, Sartre, David Rousset, turn their attention to what is generally called "the Jewish question," fascinated by its symbolic import for the understanding of the whole human problem of our time.

Or is it possible that there is no answer to these questions?

In the ghettos and concentration camps, in the ministries of London and Washington, problems have been raised which still await a solution. And humanity still lies in the shadow of the Nazi terror. Perhaps we must be satisfied to say with Albert Rohmer, a survivor of the concentration camps:

"Those who had hoped in their youth that nothing human would remain alien to them have had their wish. The concentration camp has far surpassed the aim envisaged by its creators. A far greater question has been raised, a question so grave that even those aware of the problem have not had the courage to utter it.

"And perhaps it is better that this experience, unique but useless because it is not transmissible, should appear in the history of civilization only as an enormous farce. It seems that in remote times a malefactor penetrated the sanctuary of the temple of Isis and tore the veil from the goddess. According to the tale, all that the desecrator retained of his self-willed initiation was the spasmodic laughter of the madman. But this is only a silly old legend. . . . "

# THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN ZIONISM

## *What Is Still to Be Done?*

### LUDWIG LEWISOHN

IT TAKES no long reflection to make it clear that no important aspect in the life of an ethnic or religious group can be soundly discussed or interpreted without some definition of the group, the aspect in question, the precise present situation of both. There can be no Zionism without Zionists; there can be no Jews without Judaism; there can be no inference drawn, however tentative and modest, in respect of the future of either Judaism or Zionism, of either Zionists or Jews, without some attempt to gain an insight into the immediate character of the total Jewish scene in America.

To gain such an insight is a matter of excessive difficulty. Those who speak in the name of American Jewry from several quarters are often historically conditioned at too short a range; their historical conditioning is of a yesterday in Jewish history, of that yesterday which they are fond of calling "modern times" or "the modern age," forgetful of the circumstance that we have passed through such analogous "modern" periods before and that this modern history within which they like to dwell has already sunk out of sight. "Modern" is now in this sense old and outlived in the eternal recurrences of Jewish history. The "modern" emancipation was only force applied in subtler forms and to other purposes. The force was used to de-Judaize the Jew, to rob him of himself, to put all the prizes of the world upon self-liquidation. And so many American Jews who speak for their fellows are still the willing instruments of that use of force. They are angry with their fellow Jews who have seen that use of force in its true character and who urge them to resist.

ALL force is immemorial and of death; it is allied to death. One thing and one thing alone is new in the world. It is freedom. Freedom was proclaimed; freedom was defined. Little can be added even today to what John Stuart Mill wrote in 1859. But in that same year, alas, was published *The Origin of Species*. Dubious biological "laws" were applied to man. He was to adapt himself to his environment, to be—as it turned out—the uncritical object of any environment in which he found himself; the "fittest" were to survive and so came the *blonde Bestie* and nearly wrecked the world and reducéd more than one-third of the Jewish people to dust and ashes. Next, in 1867, appeared the first volume of *Das Kapital* and man was now no longer to be a subject or an originator of history but the object of blind material forces, and another wave of enslavement, built upon other blasphemies, engulfed the world; and the immediate Stalinist liquidation of Jewishness, though Uzbeks and Turcomans may still speak and sing and write, is the last link in that inevitable chain. And yet there are Jews who will not embrace freedom or fight for it.

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LUDWIG LEWISOHN has had a long and distinguished career as critic, novelist, translator, editor, and teacher; and has for some decades been recognized as one of Zionism's most ardent spokesmen and interpreters in this country. He was born in Berlin in 1882, grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, and studied at the College of Charleston and at Columbia University. He became professor of German at the University of Wisconsin and Ohio State University and then, in the early 1920's, served as an editor of the *Nation*. His interest in Judaism and Jewish problems dates from that period, and his "return to Judaism" was recorded in a series of widely read novels. He was editor of *New Palestine* from 1943 to 1948, and since 1948 has been head of the department of English at the newly founded Brandeis University. The latest of Mr. Lewisohn's numerous books is *The Magic Word*, a volume of studies in the nature of poetry recently published by Farrar, Straus.

It is these crucial circumstances which obscure and confuse the picture—any picture of American Jewry that one might seek to draw. Since there is very little demographic or sociological material available, and since all such material *can* give only the coarsest facts and next to no interpretation, we are left with personal observation, with consultations, with inferences as our guides. These in themselves need not be untrustworthy. But many of them are made by "intellectuals," older and younger, and these, like the intellectuals of other groups, are generally alienated from the groundwork of their origin, character, and destiny. To how many of them will it occur to look for the residual symptoms of vitality among Jews? How many of them have observed and have been moved by such examples of true and fervent piety as still exist in many Orthodox congregations? How many of them have stood in obscure brownish halls in mediocre towns where a mediocre speaker, Labor or General Zionist, spoke as best he could of hope and fulfillment of hope, and have seen the simple men and women spontaneously arise in the midst of that mediocre speech in that brown hall and pour out their hearts, not without tears, in the strains of "Hatikvah"? There, in such occurrences and sights, as the members of any other group will admit at once, lie the evidences of a group's, an ethnic or religious entity's, will to live and not to perish.

And there is one other and quite commanding circumstance which, despite vain oblations to the forces of the pagan world, should give us a measure of reassurance as to the residuum of spiritual vitality in American Jewry. That is the widespread, the almost universal anxiety in regard to their character, their future, the necessary content of their lives, which prevails among American Jews. The talk about Jewish "survival," about Jewish values and Jewish culture and Jewish relations and programs for Jewish living, is often rather vain and void in itself; it is often historically uninformed; it is often tinged with vestiges of materialistic malice and degradation. All that is true and is melancholy enough. But the anxiety and the agitation exist; they have arisen spontaneously under our historic circumstances. They are symptomatic of a still faint but quite real aspiration on the part of American Jewry to be the shaper or the re-shaper of its destiny and resist, in some small measure, the dictates of force and of the evils of force.

We may, then, in respect of our specific problem and discussion, begin with the assumption that many, many thousands of Jews in America are seeking with some anguish of spirit a way for themselves and their children, a way of life, a way of faith appropriate to them as Jews and as Americans. In the immediate foreground is still tragically often fear, false fear of the precisely wrong forces that *are* to be feared. There is fear of freedom and its assertion; there is fear of being what ineluctably we are, as though mimicry were ever even security; there is, in brief, still fear, especially in comparatively high places, of facing our problem according to its real terms and not according to repressions and avoidances. It may be that the Stalinist murder of Jewishness coming after the Nazi murder of Jews will complete the historic picture for the still reluctant and that the day draws nearer in which all American Jews will set their feet upon a path of freedom.

Of that freedom and of the historic foundation of that freedom, the Zionist movement remains, as it has been through the ages, the sign and symbol. Let us repeat: through the ages! For of the modern Zionist movement only the name and the techniques are new. The reason why this is not universally understood is because we have reached in recent decades in the West of Europe and in America a Jewishly strange and empty period in which Jews, the most historically minded of peoples, began to forget their history and thus lose their awareness of the unbroken continuity of character and destiny. They began, at most, to nibble at Torah as at a "merely" religious and therefore negligible document; they rejected Talmud and Midrash as quaint and "dated" documents the while, amusingly enough, they studied *Beo-*

*wulf*, the *Chanson de Roland,* the *Nibelungenlied,* Shakespeare, and Racine, as adequate and beautiful symbols of the ethnic character of other groups.

The spiritual centrality, whether as fact or symbol, of the land of Israel in Jewish life, extends through all changes of circumstance and fortune from *before* the conquest of Canaan to this day. Dispersion did not affect it. From Babylon the best of the people went home. When in later ages, for instance in the Hellenistic period, the Diaspora became too numerous and too deeply rooted in the various lands of its dwelling to resettle in Palestine, then, as Philo tells us in *De specialibus legibus,* "thousands of Jews from thousands of towns, from east and west and north and south, fared to Jerusalem for the great festivals." Moreover, the Jews of the Roman Empire taxed themselves voluntarily, as we know from Cicero's *Pro Flacco* and from other sources, to send monies to Palestine. For this purpose they received permission from the imperial fiscal authorities for the otherwise prohibited export of gold.

Thus it is seen that even the United Palestine Appeal has a millennial tradition behind it. If today there are emissaries from the State of Israel in the lands of the dispersion, that too is no novelty, neither the thing nor even the name. For after the fall of the Temple, the patriarchate of Jerusalem sent forth messengers for the spiritual consolidation of the people. Late in the 4th century CE, Saint Jerome writes in no hostile fashion: "To this day messengers are sent by the patriarchs of the Jews" (*"Usque hodie a patriarchis Judaeorum apostolos missi. . . ."*). And he goes on to explain that the word *apostolos* is the translation of the Hebrew *sheliach,* which is the identical term used today.

The rest of the story, aside from the fact that in *no* generation were there not Jews who sought actually to return to the land, is precipitated in the liturgy as the very core of the aspirations of an entire people. Nor is there any Jew in the world today removed by more than three generations at most from that ancestor of his who with entire conviction and entire faith prayed daily for the "freedom" of Israel to gather in its exiles from the four corners of the earth, for the return of the Divine Abiding, the *Shechina,* to Zion, for the rebuilding of the throne of David, who did not utter with his whole heart the prayer: *u-va l'tsion goel!* May a redeemer arise for Zion!

The modern Zionist movement had then, it is clear, unfathomable forces to draw on in the consciousness of the people. The political impulse, it is true, came from the West of Europe, from "emancipated" Jews with a blurred Jewish memory. Astonishing is that passage in Herzl's diaries where, some friend having given him a copy of Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation,* he first learns of the existence and culmination before him of all that he had discovered for himself. But modern Zionism, the transformation into action and into political and mass action of the immemorial aspiration, a continuation of the unbroken tradition by other means, had to come from the West. For it was in the West that the Emancipation displayed its bitter bankruptcy. Here high hopes had been nourished for peace and freedom; here millions of Jews had made the vain oblation of "reform" and assimilation and shown their utter devotion to their secular nationalisms by every civic virtue, by the last sacrifice on every field of battle. And here peace and freedom, save for a few brief years, were farther away than ever; here rose the poisonous fumes of that new "racial" anti-Semitism that was to end in the torture and destruction of a whole people.

THIS is worth repeating in summary: the modern Zionist movement was the continuation of a millennial aspiration by other means, and these means were forced upon the Jewish people by the failure of the Emancipation. Dream and eschatological hope were turned into direct action by the unbearable pressures of a brutal world.

But in America, it will be said, the failure of the *theory* of the Emancipation, namely, that reasonable adaptation would insure equality and freedom, had not, despite Rankins and Gerald Smiths in every generation, broken down. That is true and it is a truth of the first order of import. But there were and are even here always sufficient evidences of the merely theoretical and legal character of Jewish equality, and these, added to the overwhelming compassion and vicarious fear which filled Jewish hearts and minds from Kishinev to Treblinka, caused a powerful Zionist movement naturally and inevitably to arise. What generous heart, what mind of any gallantry, Jewish or Christian, would have expected the Jews of America to stand aside, to hug their measurable security, to use their golden opportunities and to turn aside, as the modern Christian world has turned stonily aside, from the tragic sufferings of their flesh and blood? What Christian is so besotted that he can imagine Jews careless of the fate of Jews, cold, indifferent, alienated, to have been or to be better citizens? There were, there are, of course, a few such. But it would be curious to inquire into the state of mind of people who call themselves Christians and sustain and defend these few who, like the Amalekites of old, sought to obstruct their people's road to redemption.

The American Zionist movement, then, arose from the blending of an ancient aspiration and an immediate necessity. Its founders of both East and West European background derived their views from the unbroken tradition using other means. Twenty-five years ago, which is but a moment in history, American Zionists were few. They were considered eccentrics. Fifty years ago Theodor Herzl tentatively asked the late Richard Gottheil whether five thousand dollars could be raised in the United States. The enormous growth of the movement, which in reality extends but over the past decade and a half, was due to the horrors of history—to the simultaneous appearance of Hitler and the stealthy treachery of the British mandatory power. Jews were being destroyed. Gates to lands of refuge were scarcely ajar. The gates of the land of Israel were closed. Is it any wonder that the membership of one Zionist organization alone rose from forty thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand? Again the question may be asked: what would earnest Christians have thought of the moral caliber of their Jewish fellow Americans if that had *not* been so? What moral insight could fail to see that anti-Zionist Jews, under these circumstances, trumpeting their undivided Americanism, were inspired by the tenacity of fear and possessiveness rather than by the dictates of the heart and conscience in respect of either cause?

But we must not oversimplify. Historic causes of an outer nature coincided with inner needs. Deeper and deeper the world, and American Jews with it, had sunk into the morass of materialistic nihilism. Jews remained Jews. They were born as Jews and lived as Jews and died as Jews and for many of them the old contents, the eternal sanctities of Judaism, were fading. Hence they accepted Zionism as a sufficient Jewish content for their lives. They spent themselves on the redemption of the people. For the sanctification, the *kedusha,* of eternal Judaism, for the *imitatio Dei,* they substituted the now classical concepts, the redemption of the people (*ge'ulat ha-am*) through the redemption of the land (*ge'ulat ha-aretz*). They lost the historic binding between eternal Judaism and modern cultural and political Zionism as a living force. These several generations of secular Zionists achieved results such as it has been given to but few groups of men to achieve in all history. Though not without powerful assistance from the small group of religious Zionists, who had not lost the historic and metaphysical bindings, they were the chief and most numerous colonizers of the land; their political agitation and finally their military heroism created hope for the Jewish people when there seemed to be no hope. They it was who primarily and within fifty years created a nation and achieved the state.

But now, today, in 1950, and especially in America, a strange nemesis is overtaking them. The leaders, in Israel and here, are, of course, men of the highest awareness of destiny and its continuance. They knew and know that the aim was *not* a state, a flag, embassies in the capitals of the world. They knew and know that these are but the instrumentalities for the liquidation of the evil exile, for the ingathering of the homeless—instrumentalities dictated by the present barbarous methods of man's political life. They know that the central task is but begun. But the rank and file, the many thousands of secularist Jews who made secularist Zionism the Jewish content of their lives—these people are now in a state of disillusion and unadmitted dismay. They throve on political agitation in a cause so good; they gave of their time and their substance. Their spirits soared briefly when the state was proclaimed and the war won. But they were not deeply enough rooted in classical Judaism to continue with equal energy upon the now prosaic road that leads into an undetermined future.

It is for this reason that Zionist membership decreases; it is for this reason that the funds do not reach their quotas; it is for this reason that execrable voices are heard demanding if we have not done enough for those "overseas." For the tragic necessity has never been so urgent. Britain arms the Arab states and once again Christendom, still unshriven of its ineffable crimes, stands idly and equivocally by. Sinister machinations seek to wrest Jerusalem from Jewish hands. The attempt of an original population of six hundred thousand (the Yishuv of the proclamation of the state) in a land without natural resources to receive and harbor and employ and integrate all the homeless and persecuted Jews of earth represents a moral and physical effort literally without parallel in the annals of mankind. How, under these circumstances, is it conceivable that passion should relax and effort slacken? How?

This is the crucial question. This is the *whole* question in respect of the future of Zionism in America.

THE thing is so because the majority of these recent Zionists, Zionists of recent affiliation—affiliation through Jewish religious emptiness and through fear and through the very human and pitiful motivation of *absit omen*—are not in the deepest historic sense Zionists at all. Their problem in this hour is no longer a Zionist problem; it is a Jewish problem; it is a universal problem. It is the problem caused by the modern plagues of a lack of historicism and a lack of both faith and reason; it is the modern bedevilment by a pseudo-scientific nihilism. These good people filled their emotional and spiritual void by agitation for a home for their homeless and by giving gifts for that purpose. But the core of their lives was left untouched. At that core remained in stubborn recalcitrance all the idols of the pagan market places of the world. And now that there is a state and a nation in the Near East these people have sunk back into their emptiness and make money (when they can) and play games and drive cars and "go in" for canasta and television in that not even howling wilderness which the *homme moyen sensuel* calls prosperity and peace.

A REVISION is needed, a return. Here is the very center of both problems: the character and quality of American Zionism now and in the future and its status in a free society. Year after year a provincial Zionist leader of great spiritual insight used to end every conclave with the agonized Yiddish cry: *"Mir darfen fartifen dem amerikaner Tsionism* — We must *deepen* American Zionism!" That was and is symbolically, as it was in fact, the last word.

What is the purpose of Zionism, the ancient purpose and the new? To preserve the Jewish people against the inevitable attacks of a pagan and unredeemed world—against physical slaughter, as in Europe, against the murder of the Judaism without which Jews perish, as in contemporary Stalinist Russia; but also against the slower destructiveness of assimilation by an unredeemed world under false and equivocal emancipations. The necessary survival of the Jewish people, which has already survived so many peoples and empires for millennia, as the expression of God's will in history—*such* is at once our religion and our Zionism, one and indivisible. For this our fathers before us and our brothers in Europe yesterday practiced *Kiddush ha-Shem,* the sanctification of the ineffable Name by the laying down of their lives. For this we resettled the land of Israel and for this we agitated for the state; for this our sons in Israel fought and fell against the Arab onslaught; for this American Jews must continue to agitate for the security of the State of Israel and give without stint or limit toward the ingathering of the exiles there. State, flag, political involvements are but the necessities imposed upon us by a world that has found no better way for men to live in a *polis,* a city, a state, a polity. It is not really our way, the Jewish way, which as long ago as Gideon and Samuel aspired, at least, to live not under the rule of man but under the rule of God. And it is equally a part of our faith, despite the vagaries of youths poisoned by the heresies of the pagan world, the Darwinian heresy, the Marxist heresy, that the State of Israel will not, given time and security, be merely another state among the states of the pagans but will be in some sense which we cannot yet discern *a mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh,* a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The conclusion then is this: the future of American Zionism is identical with the future of American Judaism. And that future is not to anyone who has watched the situation for many years an unhopeful one. As among Christians, so among us, there is a widespread metaphysical anxiety. As among Christians, so among us, there are faint but definite signs of a return from the needless miseries of moral and spiritual nihilism. The rightist orientation of the younger Reform rabbinate, the growth of the Conservative movement, a strictly American phenomenon, the more conciliatory appearance of Orthodoxy upon the general Jewish scene—these are not unhopeful signs. Nor are such common occurrences as the founding of congregations by young and hitherto unaffiliated groups of married people for the purpose of bringing up their children as instructed Jews.

All these symptoms of better things are as yet faint and feeble. They exist. Young men have been known to take upon themselves voluntarily the yoke of the Law, having come to see that the *forms* required by the *aim* of *kedusha,* of sanctification, are no more amenable to scientific judgment or sociological analysis than are the *forms* which constitute the permanence and significance of a work of art, of the creative imagination. These are few, to be sure. The number of those who regard the Law, both the inner Law and the inferential Law of practices, as "dated" or "in conflict with 'modern' ideas," is still appalling. But since these specific "modern ideas" are being attacked from all sides, since astrophysicists and philosophers and educators in the Christian world are powerfully urging a return to faith and reason and to an education that shall not almost truculently dismiss God and equate man to a primate, it is to be foreseen that Jews, always in recent decades avid of the last word of the Gentile world, will absorb the excellent influences of today as they did the wretched ones of an immediate yesterday.

If under these aspects the American Jewish community survives Jewishly, its Zionism will be a central aspect of its religious faith—its faith that the Jewish people, the suffering servant of mankind described by the prophet, must survive as a religio-ethnic entity, elected to suffering and service, to exemplary form and sanctification as the immanent core of that historic process which was determined by the Divine Will. Thus Amos proclaimed in the 9th century before the Common Era, and what he proclaimed has quite literally worked itself out in the history of all the succeeding centuries.

The question often asked, especially in these days, as to the place of Zionism in America, in a free society, has commonly been asked from impure motives and far too often answered on wrongly conciliatory assumptions. "The law of the land is the law," says the Talmud in unmistakable terms and no sane man has ever been able to deny the quality of Jewish citizenship, from loyalty and public generosity in small things to the ultimate sacrifice upon the field of battle in a hundred wars. This has been true in all the lands of Jewish dwelling; it has been conspicuously true in America. Why should it not have been? For hitherto America has been a truly free society, of which the basic freedom is the freedom to be different within the framework of common political interest and purpose. What then has motivated Gentile criticism and Jewish fears? The shadow, even among us in this still free society, of the foul doctrine of the intolerance of difference within unity; the emergence of the dread doctrine that man lives only by sufferance of the master, the absolutist state, which dictates his entire physical and moral life. But one wonders at times whether this is really so, whether this general danger is really imminent. For no one hears criticism of a distinguished representative of the Irish Free State telling his Irish American audience to agitate for a united Ireland and to send their sons to rebuild the land of the fathers. One hears no criticism of the United Polish Societies in America or of the Order of the Sons of Italy in America. And indeed there is no legitimate reason for criticism. For undoubtedly these Irishmen, these Poles, these Italians are excellent citizens and their moral preoccupation with the lands of their origin is a function of their citizenship in a free society.

WHY are Jews attacked at all? Why are any Jews fearful at all? Why are Jews bedeviled by the silly notion of divided or shared allegiances? The late Justice Brandeis told them long years ago that every man has multiple loyalties and that there was no conflict between their Americanism and their Zionism. That there is now an Israel, as there always was an Ireland, a Poland, an Italy, only makes the analogy closer. But the cold fact is, of course, that analogies are very imperfect. Zionism is a fundamentally religiously inspired movement of which the aim is the preservation of the Jewish people in its integral character. And this aspiration of the Jewish people to survive and be itself has always met the resistance of a pagan world for reasons that are moral and metaphysical—for the one and only and ultimate reason that the Jews by their very existence have issued to the world the challenge of righteousness, of brotherly love, of peace. This reason constitutes the special difference of the Jewish position from all other positions. For this reason Jews have been burned and slaughtered; for this reason the Talmud was burned in medieval Europe and for this reason Hebrew has always been the only proscribed and forbidden language in the Soviet Union. For this reason, finally, some—only a very few—of our American liberal friends are disturbed at the notion that the smooth assimilation and painless disappearance of Jews has been halted, under God's providence, by the Zionist movement and the establishment of the *Medinat Yisrael. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* Identical motivations make some Jews afraid and a few Gentiles irritable at the notion of an American *halutziut*—the emigration of American Jewish youths to Israel. Memories of a once free world are repressed. The old maxim *ubi bene ibi patria*—where it is well with thee, there is thy fatherland—is forgotten. It is pretended that the world was always this wretched present world of tensely divided prisons, and it is forgotten that throughout the ages it was never thought an ignoble thing for any man to dwell in a land where, according to honor and conscience, he was most needed or in which he could find his highest moral self-fulfillment.

IN A free society Jews have nothing to fear. It is of the essence of their religion—as well as of common sense—that Jews must survive in order that Judaism live. And it is their further faith that Judaism is a redemptive power not only for themselves but for mankind. Had the world not resisted that redemptive call, Rome would have let us dwell in our own land in peace. There would not have been a hopeless Diaspora. Had the Diaspora communities been left in peace in a truly Christian world, the regathering of the exiles in the land of Israel would have remained a part of the Messianic hope and the Messianic vision of the latter days. Even Theodor Herzl declared that, had the Gentiles ever left us in peace for even three generations, a different story might have been told.

They never have. They do not now. Here, in the unexampled freedom of America, Congressman Rankin makes his speeches in the manner of the late Goebbels and his fellow Congressmen utter no rebuke and no reply. Dark and numerous and vocal cohorts are behind him, and Jews, deeply attached to their American ideals and allegiances, read and hear and remember and tremble.

Let them remember! Why was the prayer for restoration in the synagogues, the prayer that the Divine Abiding return to Zion, transformed into a political and colonizing movement? Whence arose the modern Zionist movement with its secular aims and methods? It was forced upon us by the failure of the Emancipation, by the circumstance that Jews were not given liberty and equality except sporadically and briefly at the sacrifice of both their Judaism and their Jewishness, of both their faith and their form. And finally even those who had made that immoral sacrifice were attainted to the third generation. The so-called Christian world forced into our hands the secular weapons and the secular techniques to survive at all.

This, too, is to be remembered by our Christian fellow Americans. And many, indeed, do so. There are several Americas. There is the America of Bartley Crum and Walter Lowdermilk and Reinhold Niebuhr, all good and convinced Zionists. But alas, let *them* remember, that there was also a Germany once—a Germany represented by Karl Barth and Thomas Mann and others who, even like our Jews, are refugees or in their graves. Blessed are they who were able to go to Israel, to go home. To sustain them there at home and to defend that home is the duty of both Jew and Christian. For to the Jew Israel is a religious and redemptory culmination; to the Christian it is a constant reminder of the fact that modern political Zionism and the colonization of the land and the erection of the state in this generation and in this age were ultimately occasioned by the Christlessness of Christendom.

# NEW YORK, 1950

## *Unofficial Notes of a Census-Taker*

### JULIUS HORWITZ

THE FIRST doorbell I rang was answered by an old widowed Negro woman who lived alone on the top floor of a red-brick office building in the financial district of Manhattan. It was Saturday morning, the first day of the 1950 census. The old Negro woman made me feel that the happiest people in the world are old widowed Negro women with just enough money to live on and reasonably comfortable places to live in, and who aren't afraid of the end of life. Perhaps they're lonely, and sometimes they may ask: did God do all this and why? But still she seemed to be the happiest person I had seen in a long time. And, past seventy, she looked for work, kept house, and wanted to make sure that the government got everything correct about her.

Around the corner from her musty Victorian apartment, under the Third Avenue El, and farther east, close to the river, lived the handful of people that were left of the once densely inhabited downtown New York. The women stay on, eighty years old, seventy, living on the top floors of office buildings, cleaning for a living—or rather for rent—and afraid to move elsewhere; others have been charwomen for so long in the financial district that they feel it's home and hang on to the few remaining habitable buildings. These are cold-water flats, no toilets, no tubs, dirty, dilapidated, the El roaring past the living room windows, no community, nothing but the curiously exciting daytime streets of the financial district. The people had to be tracked down, literally one by one, to their sunless, cold, ugly apartments. Under the El, two tenements, side by side, but for whole blocks no people. One man alone in a room that one can only enter through a public toilet. Another man living in the very upper tip of a skyscraper, so that you had to reach his apartment by climbing a circular staircase.

AT FIRST Greenwich Village seemed to be filled with wives separated from husbands, husbands separated from wives, and beautiful girls separated from their families. It's probably correct to say that Greenwich Village has the highest percentage of divorced people in America for a community where divorce isn't a special product, as in Reno, and possibly the highest percentage of first-rate attractive girls for a community where beauty isn't a special cult, as in Hollywood. In a single block you run the gamut of urban living. Going from door to door, being admitted *carte blanche*, seeing from one building to the next the extreme diversities in taste, education, income, and housing, is like taking a sociology course in a roller-coaster. Nowhere else in the world, I suspect, can you experience anything similar. You begin with a tenement, dark, dank, inhabited by low-income families, growling voices, family arguments, old wasted men, and then to a rooming house, cubicles holding copywriters, models, commercial artists, typists, radio writers, salesgirls, students, cooks, waiters, artists, dancers—and then next door is a town house, one family to five stories, rich old American family, beautiful furniture that would bring a high price at auction; then a large apartment house, twenty families, seven rooms to a family, big,

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WHILE engaged in collecting information for the 1950 census, JULIUS HORWITZ allowed his observations to go beyond the narrow horizons of the government questionnaire; the result is this composite sketch of New York at the half-century: a city of strangers trying to make contact with each other. Mr. Horwitz's sketches of city life have appeared frequently in COMMENTARY; the most recent, "The Expatriate," was in the May issue. Mr. Horwitz was born in Cleveland in 1920.

square, roomy; and then a row of converted brownstones, housing writers, teachers, clerks, secretaries, a lead in a Broadway show, a singer, more houses, more professions, and then, two tenements, Irish and Italian intermingled, end the street.

How do they live? Reproductions from the Museum of Modern Art on the wall. Van Gogh is the favorite. An occasional Toulouse-Lautrec. A fake Renoir. Few originals. Dogs of all breeds. Studio couches dominate. Books, rows of books. Records. Black walls, red walls—burlap walls. Square ordinary flats furnished with installment-plan furniture. Enormous oversized rooms. North skylights. Easels ten feet high. Pianos. Miserable little rooms with a bed, a dresser, a chair. Toilet in the hallway for three people. Blond oak furniture. Conspicuous investments to be modern. Just everything thrown together. No pattern. Some come off. Others make you feel so sorry for the people that you want to say, look, leave Manhattan, go home, stop trying so hard, it isn't worth it, Iowa must be a wonderful place to live in. No living in sin. The census doesn't recognize sin. A man and woman together are to be recognized as husband and wife. Salesgirls from Macy's having a party. "Hello! Look who's here. The census-taker. The census-taker! Look, he's a real census-taker. Are you a real census-taker?"

With some people you talk. A famous professor of anthropology whose little daughter wants to be in on her first census. A psychologist who never read Tolstoy. A radio announcer who is bursting to tell you that he makes $10,000 a year. A dress designer who makes $13,000 and you wonder how. A little man in tweeds with a high piping voice who insists there is no form devised to record his personality. "Look, don't ask me any more questions, there are some people you just can't census."

The girls. Nobody ever seems to see the girls in Greenwich Village. Only a handful invade the neighborhood bars. But the rest remain forever in their rooms. Two girls from Nebraska sharing a flat. Editorial workers on a magazine. Copywriters. Advertising assistants. Research workers. Radio producers. Script writers. Teachers. Young, sleek, college-trained girls. But so lonely. One girl in a black dress, chalk face, body limp, room dirty, repeating over and over again: "I'm going home in the fall. I think I'm going home. I don't like it here. I think I'm going home." You can spot the rich girls. They never complain about the rent. But the working girls. They gripe. And they talk. They seem to be anxious to talk to somebody. A man in their apartment. But no sex. Only offers of beer. The models. Who ever sees a model but a photographer? One and a half rooms. A modern webbed chair. How little money they earn. Rent to pay. New clothes. Supper. Breakfast. Phone bills. Carfare. Income. One thousand. Two thousand. Three thousand is high. You begin to think that life is complete if you can *only* make four thousand a year. The girls are so damn pretty. Why don't they go home? Marry the richest boy in town. Live in a detached house with fruit trees and a white fence. One girl permits the top of her breasts to show. "Tell them the bastard landlord is getting too much for this hole. Eighty-five dollars a month. What do I think the apartment is worth unfurnished? Thirty dollars. That's all. Thirty dollars." It's a great question. "Is your apartment furnished or unfurnished? If it is furnished what do you think the unfurnished rent should be?" It's the only opportunity to express yourself on the census form. And the girls yell the loudest. Their fields are all jammed. Editorial assistants, copywriters, receptionists, models, editors, all low-paid, dozens of girls to pounce on every vacancy. But they pay the Village rents so life will be a little less empty.

One girl, an actress, makes the world stand still. A blonde who uncomfortably gives you the feeling that the world is ice cream and cake and you're an idiot not to realize it. A comic book princess, perfectly formed, lovely, but as innocent of the world as a cellophane-wrapped lollypop. How much did you earn last year? "Golly, I don't know. Will it be all right to call my lawyer?" Certainly. "Hello lawyer. How much did I make last year?" An astronomical figure. Next door the rent is five dollars a week and itinerant Italian cooks and waiters come and go.

One street makes you so nervous that it's a task to record the answers. A dirty, ugly, short little street. The inevitable dull red brick. From outside the appearance of a town house. Inside: no lights, broken wooden stairs. Most of the people you talk to in the Village have a vague or real understanding of what one is up against for the sake of living in most of the available Village apartments. But in this house the people are just trapped. They have no place else to go. The parlor floor is sealed off. Three rents for one. The first room contains a husband, his wife, four infants, in a space twelve feet by fifteen. No bath. No toilet. Shared. High rent. The next room has an ornate old bed and an ornate old woman. Upstairs, men half undressed, beds unmade, dirty shirts, dark hallways; upstairs again, on the top, a small room, a big bed, a big chest, a small bed, a husband, wife, two infants, a 100-watt bulb. Next house, railroad flats, five dark rooms, one old lady has five rooms, she lets out four rooms, won't tell how much she pays for rent. Afraid to expose her greed. Heavy hanging drapes. The rotten odor of the used-to-be dollar whorehouses in Alliance, Ohio. The third house from the corner. People trying. Rooms painted. New furniture. Families. Clean-cut radio producers. Bright bubbling wives. A television set off pitch. An original painting on the wall. Rows of books. Classical records. And one room is so goddamn ugly you want to run out on it before your head splits open.

The Italians and the Irish form the bedrock of the Village. The Irish on the West Side. The Italians on all sides. They aren't transient, players on a checkerboard, like the girls from Indiana. They live in dilapidated flats on Bleecker Street, duplexes on Charles Street, clean, ordinary flats, make a living, a good living; but some don't hesitate to tell you: "The docks are rotten. Two days work a week. Break your back. How can you live. No, I don't know what my husband makes. Maybe two thousand. But then we get relief." The Irish dock-workers have the largest families and the most precarious incomes. The Irish and the Italians make up the bedrock. But the others from every state, including Wyoming, make up the Village. Greenwich Village. A community largely of strangers, who don't want to be strangers, who want to dance in the street, but instead find themselves in dreary flats, drinking bottled beer.

THE East Fifties are supposed to be one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the world. It is also the poorest. On Second Avenue the landlords blocked off the railroad flats and converted each into separate units. One half rents for $11 a month; the half facing the sun for $16.

On the side streets that empty into Sutton Place the landlords converted the railroad flats into one-room modern studios, beds folding into couches, making a home for people who just can't get into Sutton Place but wouldn't think of living anywhere else; a curious *mélange* of salesladies, advertising writers, radio producers, investment agents, nurses, salesmen, actresses, people similar to those in the Village except they lack the *éclat*. These are the most lonely people in the world, I think.

The apartments are deserted until six. Everybody works. You have to, to pay the rent. One room. A bathroom. A kitchenette that hangs on the side of a wall. Sleek modern furniture, uncomfortable chairs. Cocktails. Highballs. The smell of gin in the hallways. What do you drink? If there were no cocktail to come home to, no telephone to pick up, the people living here would probably blow out their brains *en masse*. The incomes small. Not enough to cross the Avenue. The models may get a little of the dazzle. You walk in on a cocktail party. No laughter. The heavy drinking hasn't started yet. The hostess, absolutely lovely, a model, talks to you, low, sexy, still in her act. The one-room apartment is only temporary. Sutton Place is the goal. The tenants have the souls of the people around the corner, down the street. A few are married. But so many live alone. What are they after? Will you have a drink, what do you drink—oh, you're taking the census! Unbend, let loose. These are the people who never kept up with the Joneses. It's a relief to walk in on a human being. A *grande dame,* a regal old lady, money gone, magnificent face, the most sensible apartment on the street, living alone, and when I praise her maple sewing cabinet, she tells me what it means to be past seventy and ready to die.

On the top floor I almost caused a tragedy. A woman is entertaining a well-pressed, straight-haired man. She tries to avoid the interview. Please come another time, please. But it will only take a minute. Then the question about age. She hesitates. The man excuses himself from the room. Now he knows, she says in a panic, now he'll guess how old I am. I look at the bottle of Canadian Club on the cocktail table, the two glasses, the couch, her slim body, and I want to tell her, don't worry, he'll follow you, why in the hell do you think he's here? If these people lived anywhere else they would be the real middle class but in Manhattan they have nothing. One woman is hysterical when I knock on the door. God damn it, you would come tonight. I can't talk to you. And then I hear the quarrel inside, her husband lost his job.

ON SECOND AVENUE, in the chopped-up cold-water flats, you find the people who have almost completely given up. No ties. Women alone, old, never married. Men, dirty, old, coming to the door in long underwear. The rooms are dark, sparsely furnished, and you get a sense of at last finding the end of the road, the last pretense of patterned living, before the Bowery, the asylums, death. The doors are all bolted. Some have heavy chains. You wonder what the people are guarding. The rooms smell. Some are genuinely perverse. From floor to ceiling, burlap bags of old clothes, newspapers, rags, blocking off the whole room except a little space for a stove and old musty chairs where three people sit eating barley soup while you ask: Did you work last week? If so, how many hours? What state were you born in? How old were you on your last birthday? As though it all made good solid sense. And in another room you linger. Books line the mantel. The first books you've seen since the Village. The room is bare except for a kitchen table and two chairs. The lights don't work. You look closer at the dusty books. Thoreau. Emerson. Kant. St. Augustine. Browning. Keats. Shelley. Plato. Lucretius. Spinoza. The little man, unshaven, in a dirty collarless shirt, waits for you to ask the work question: "I don't work. I quit working. On my last job, a dishwasher. I have just enough money to live on. I don't go to the movies. I don't listen to the radio. I read—who do you think was the greatest English poet?" It's a matter of taste, you say. "But just pick a man." All right, I like Shakespeare in *Hamlet.* "What do you think of Browning?" First-rate. "What about St. Augustine? Do you know the *City of God?*" God is introduced. He is a churchman but he doesn't like the church. The philosophers didn't understand God, he tells me. I think they did, I tell him. "Who do you think has the finest style? I think Carlyle." I answer, I don't like to talk about style. But I like Swift. Style is the way a man feels, his mood, not a mechanical arrangement. He listens, agrees. But I have a thousand people to see. "Stay and talk," he urges. "Let's talk about St. Augustine. A good fleshy man." Some other time. "Come up any time." I will. Goodbye. And another room, the bolt sliding back, an Irish face out of a Dublin saloon, a pinched, hollow woman sitting stiffly in the dark. The man, wait a minute, I'll put on the light. And he puts a match to the gaslight in the chandelier.

SUTTON PLACE is around the corner. The loftiest living in the country.

*Luftmenshen*—and the others, coat manufacturers, shirt manufacturers, doctors, coat buyers, shirt buyers, dress buyers, importers, exporters, advertising executives, vice presidents, and the rich old ladies living on "$10,000-plus." The rich somehow seemed to pick up the phrase, "$10,000-plus," either from the newspapers or their lawyers. The "$10,000-plus" refers to the income question, and of all people who made less than $10,000 a year the exact amount of their income was required, but for the others "$10,000-plus" would do. And the $10,000-plusses live. Big, beautiful, spacious apartments, mechanically tightened together by interior decorators, sweeping views of Manhattan, bottles of expensive liquor on antique trays. It beats the Village. In Greenwich Village on a single block you can be sure of running the gamut of life, but here are the people who have licked the system.

The dress designer is busy spraying toilet water on the top of her breasts. "Am I married? No. I'm divorced. And I hope the bastard is dead." Why the language? Her apartment is the ultimate of the Manhattan fable. A penthouse. Early American furniture gives the impression of two loot-hungry decorators making a raid on all the antique shops. An orgy of furniture. The woman is drunk in the apartment below. Everybody is drinking, but the woman is drunk. The man is trying to give me the right answers because he's here on a permanent visa and doesn't want to alienate the government. But the drunken woman keeps shouting: "He doesn't have a right coming in here. He doesn't have a right. He doesn't have a right. . . ." Downstairs the woman is waiting for cocktails. She is dressed for dinner. The apartment is "classic" American. Her husband comes in. A handsome boy. Stockbroker. Black silk umbrella. Black homburg. Black suit. The first thing he does is phone for whisky. Whisky is the pre-dinner drink. The post-dinner drink.

Heavy carpeting. A maid. A long leather bar. Tall polished glasses. More booze. An enormous television set anchors the living room. A beautiful regular-featured blonde on the couch. The man is big, fat, old, a stockbroker. And the girls who don't know what they do for a living, lush, in blue silk robes, who don't dare lie to the government, who live in apartments that actually look like Hollywood sets. "Now tell me what you do for a living." "I'm a dancing teacher." "Good. Now, how many hours did you teach last week?" "Oh—I only teach over the week end." "Well, how many hours?" "Oh! You know what to put down. Be a good guy and say the right thing."

You have to stop counting people every so often to hurry across 57th Street to the tavern on 58th Street for a glass of cold beer. It begins to seem natural for people to pay $600 a month for a four-room apartment. To have rooms filled with the most obviously expensive stuff on the market. For television sets to pop out of elaborate secretaries that fill the side of a long wall. For women to say, over and over again, disdainfully: "I don't work. I've never worked."

One building, more than the others, seemed to house a particularly solid concentration of flat, two-dimensional people of the 20th century. A few people are there by mistake, or housing necessity, but the others seem to have come together by affinity.

One woman was definitely living in the house by error. At first she wouldn't admit me. She had to call down to the lobby to find out if I had been cleared by the doorman. "I'm sorry to have made you wait. But you don't blame me. You can't trust people in this neighborhood. Such funny people. Come in. Come in. You look so tired." She was wearing a cotton housecoat. "Sit down by the table. Put your book on the table. Such a heavy book they make you carry around. Let me get you a drink. Maybe you'd like some whisky?" It was too hot for a drink of straight whisky but I said all right to please her. She brought out a square bottle of twelve-year-old Scotch. "A whole glass?" she asked. Just a little, please. And then she saw me looking at the white tablecloth with a Hebrew prayer as its design. "You're a Jewish boy, aren't you?" she said. "Tell me the truth." I'm a Jewish boy, I told her, that's the truth. "A Jewish boy. You know, I'm Jewish, too. I put the tablecloth out for my father-in-law. He likes to be in a Jewish house. This building. I'd like to move away. The rent we pay." The living room was stuffed with furniture. Very expensive conservative-modern. And bird-cages. Three singing birds. "I sit here all day. Nobody to talk to. You know, they have famous people living in this house. A girl who sings over the radio."

The house belongs to the people who can afford it—not to the young couple in a narrow one-and-a-half who can't even afford furniture because of the high rent—but to the producers, actresses, stage stars, slick writers, advertising executives, designers, publishers, art dealers, stockbrokers, financial advisers, and the real rich, the people who live on $10,000-plus, the people who sweep in money out of the air, who make the rest of us feel like damned fools. But sit and drink their booze, examine the arrangement of the furniture, the faces of the men who produce the money, especially the women who look as tightly wound up as Humphrey Bogart on the screen, and these *luftmenshen* who live on air, are air themselves. No books. No decent pictures. Not even good reproductions. No art. You seldom hear music. They lead a good second-rate existence. If I had their money. . . .

Almost everybody is eager to answer the questions. To help all they can. The interviews are usually swift, to the point. Only with the unmarried women past thirty is there a touch of sadness, an intrusion. When you ask, were you ever married, the women, inevitably, in a tone of real regret, say, no, I've never been married. And you look around at their attempts to turn a one-room apartment into a home, living among strangers, hard streets, and you feel sad, and look down on your form to save them the embarrassment of looking into your eyes.

There are people proud to tell you that they have a television set. Artists insulted, pride injured, egos squirming, when you innocently ask: how many hours did you work last week? And painters who straightway answer the questions. Executives who refuse to commit themselves to work hours; executives who answer a simple question simply. Women who lie miserably about their age; women who don't give a damn. Onetime immigrants who've been in America for thirty years, ashamed to say they're not citizens. People who live in slums, apologetic when they say they have no bathtub, no toilet, no heat, instead of saying like one old Jewish woman: "Why do you ask me that? This is a slum. A dirty slum. A place to live. It's a slum. Write that down. A slum."

There are all kinds of people, of course, but wherever you go, one sentiment is so strong in all of the people that you begin to realize it comes from something basic and deep in the American character, rather than a fleeting manifestation invoked by the census. At first, superficially, it seems to come from the urge "to be counted." Nobody wants to be left out. Everybody wants to be included in the big count. But the welcome, the readiness to invite you in, the offer of drinks, cigarettes, even dinner, the best chair, a desk—all this is their way of showing the government in Washington, D. C., that it still belongs to the people, and they can afford to be generous when it makes an extraordinary request. The pattern was repeated over and over again. Only once was there any fear expressed that the census might be used as a way of obtaining damaging information. Which is not to say that the people are unaware of dangerous possibilities in current politics, but rather to say that they are conscious of their own strength. A strength that has been observed and recorded by too many people to bear much repetition here. But there it was. A genuine concern to be included in the big count, to help make up the total American picture, hospitality, warmth, even to the extent of tuning the sound out on the television set until the end of the interview.

# GANDHI: SELF-REALIZATION THROUGH POLITICS

## *The Mystery of Leadership*

### ISAAC ROSENFELD

THERE has probably never been another "great man"—that vast, vague, abstract personage which we celebrate in human terms but conceive as a stuffed shirt—who has written so simple and direct a book as Gandhi's *Autobiography* (Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1948). In the name of Truth, and for the purpose of describing his experiments with Truth, he tells us about his character, detail by detail, with a directness and completeness that is astonishing and shocking and that may appear irrelevant even after we have grasped the connection. But irrelevant these minutiae are not; Gandhi merely understood the facts of life better than the rest of us.

This Great Soul, Latter-day Avatar, Architect of India's Freedom, as he was called, reveals to us his early attitudes toward parents and teachers, his sexual practices, his relations with his wife, his theories on the subjects of diet, medicine, and cleanliness, and his various experiments in these fields; he describes himself ironing collars with the same underlying seriousness and attachment to moral significance as when he tells of nursing the sick and the dying. Often one must laugh, our sophistication demands it; to withhold the ridicule this self-confessed quack frequently deserves, is to refuse to honor the simpleton in him, the plain *nudnik,* and to violate his unity. He was all of a piece, the man whose desire was "to wipe away every tear from every Indian eye," the neurotic who regarded sexual intercourse without intent of producing children as a grave crime, the submissive rebel who spent his days confounding authority and meanwhile kept his eye open for a vegetable substitute for cow's milk. It was all one with him.

Nehru said of this man: "People who do not know Gandhi personally and have only read his writings are apt to think that he is a priestly type, extremely puritanical, long-faced, Calvinistic, and a kill-joy. . . . But his writings do him an injustice; he is far greater than what he writes, and it is not quite fair to quote what he has written and to criticize it. He is the very opposite of the Calvinistic priestly type. His smile is delightful, his laughter infectious, and he radiates lightheartedness. There is something childlike about him which is full of charm. When he enters a room he brings a breath of fresh air . . . which lightens the atmosphere. He is an extraordinary paradox."

All this appears in the autobiography—the smile as well as the long face. The paradox lies not so much in the conjunction of opposite qualities (this is common enough, and it can be explained) as in the peculiar exception he provides to the rule of reaping what one sows. He emerged uncrippled from the crippling inner life he made himself lead; almost as though he had never led it, and more natural than many a man who is pledged to accommodate the instincts.

"What I want to achieve," he declared, " . . . is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha* [salvation, freedom

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In much of his recent thinking and writing, Isaac Rosenfeld has been preoccupied with tracing the interrelation of deep instinctual drives, politics, and religion in human personality and social action. Here Mr. Rosenfeld, examining Mohandas Gandhi's *Autobiography,* attempts to find the wellsprings of life and philosophy that produced one of the 20th century's most imposing and enigmatic leaders. Mr. Rosenfeld was born in Chicago in 1918, and studied at New York University and the Universities of Chicago and Wisconsin. He is the author of the highly praised novel of Jewish life, *Passage from Home,* and numerous short stories and articles. Mr. Rosenfeld now teaches at New York University, and is at work on a second novel.

from birth and death; it was "an unbroken torture" to him that he was still so far from this]. All that I do . . . and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end." To understand him, one must understand, as he did, the connections among chastity, self-realization in politics, and the belief that a man's diet should consist only of fruit and nuts.

### Early Life

GANDHI was an extremely shy child. He adored his mother (her strict observance of fasts and of the most rigorous religious vows are of significance for his later life) and loved his father not so well (he speaks of him as short-tempered and "To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasures. For he married for the fourth time when he was over forty." Gandhi was born of this last marriage). His school days were lonely, "books and lessons" were often his "only companions." He was punctilious in attendance, but would run home the moment the bell rang, afraid to play with his schoolmates lest anyone poke fun at him. Of his classroom experiences he remembers "nothing more . . . than having learnt, in company with other boys, to call our teacher all kinds of names. . . . [This] would strongly suggest that my intellect must have been sluggish and my memory raw." It suggests even more strongly that his teachers were no good, but of this, not a word. It was not like Gandhi to criticize authority. Of a later period in his life, when he still considered British rule beneficial to India, he said, "Hardly ever have I known anyone to cherish such loyalty as I did to the British Constitution." But by that time he was already learning the technique, unavailable to the merely submissive child, of taking a stand against authority and simultaneously assuaging his guilt feelings. The method consisted in inflicting on himself, for every act of insubordination, some hardship, most frequently in religious form —a vow to abstain from certain foods, to give up certain pleasures—as though in punishment for a fault greater than the one he must condemn in the authorities.

At the age of thirteen he married Kasturbai, who was illiterate. For a number of years Gandhi was very jealous and suspicious of her, and he made her miserable by watching her every move and imposing severe restrictions on her social life. He wanted to make her an ideal wife. "My ambition was to *make* her live a pure life, learn what I learnt, and identify her life and thought with mine" (italics his). But he was "passionately fond of her," and lust prevented him from devoting himself to her education. She remained poorly educated to the end, having profited so little from his instruction that she could do no better than write with difficulty "simple letters and understand simple Gujarati. I am sure that had my love for her been absolutely untainted by lust, she would be a learned lady today; for I could then have *conquered* her dislike for studies. I know that *nothing is impossible for pure love*" (italics mine; this is one of the many indications that pure love, for Gandhi, was often like a pile driver).

Gandhi's memories of his early life are distorted in the direction typical of ascetics, who endow the past with an extravagance of error and sin. The motive, one must suppose, is to make the rectitude of the present life appear so much the nobler and, in its unconscious part, to quicken the pleasure-starved heart with at least an imagined lust. The excesses of which he speaks are perfectly innocent: smoking, a minor theft, the eating of meat; and the rest are attributable, if they are excesses at all, to adolescent sexuality enjoying its first fling, thanks to the institution of child marriage.

But an event of this period—in Gandhi's system a terrible sin—which confirmed the guilt feelings about sex that he must already have had and proved crucial for his later attitudes, occurred with the death of his father when Gandhi was sixteen. Kaba Gandhi had long been ill and his son Mohandas took turns with other members of the family in nursing him. On the night of his father's death young Gandhi, relieved by his uncle, went straight to his bedroom to have intercourse with his wife, who, to his "double shame," was pregnant with their first child. Father Gandhi died while they were having intercourse. Gandhi never forgave himself for this, and all his life remembered that it was sexual desire which prevented him from being at his father's bedside when he died; he also assumed the guilt for the death of his first child, born of this pregnancy. Taking into account the attitudes toward sex that he later developed—for example, the extreme agitation he showed when a young man and woman of his *ashrama* (religious order) broke their vow of chastity, and the fast he undertook to punish them—as well as the latent hostility he must have felt for his father, one must suppose that he considered himself a murderer, and the sexual act a murderous one.

At the age of eighteen he underwent a "long and healthy spell of separation" from his wife; he sailed to London to study law. There had been opposition in the family to his going, and technically, Gandhi was outcaste all his life for breaking the prohibition of overseas travel; but he obtained his mother's consent by taking a vow not to touch wine, women, or meat while abroad. He stuck to his vow and led a poor, lonely, grinding life in England for four years; despite the gentlemanly airs he assumed, silk gloves and top hat, he remained shy and awkward and most of his contacts were with vegetarians. Gandhi's shyness stood in the way of his legal career on his return to India. He was too bashful and frightened to speak up in court; and also too much the egotist. But that egotism can lie behind failure too, Gandhi never recognized. He was aware of his egotism only on the level of direct contact with the world, never suspecting that the measures he adopted to hold himself back might also have been motivated by it. He was already a perfectionist; and it was the high standard that he set for himself, along with the fear that his performance might not overwhelm the world, that stopped his tongue. Later, when he had mastered the way of satisfying both his extreme egotism and his passion for humility, he proved himself a moving speaker.

The first step toward the resolution of his lifelong conflict over egotism he took in South Africa, where he had gone to make another attempt at the practice of law. He found that a certain measure of satisfaction could come to him through service to others. The more he denied himself the immediate satisfaction of acting on his own behalf and in the interest of his growing family, the more capable he became. The usual income of rewards in fame and money he had always checked because of guilt—a guilt, precisely, over the demands he made of the world; these were his true "excesses." He learned to detach himself from his ambitions, to ask, while serving others, less and less for himself, letting the rewards accumulate to the credit of his public self (it was his greatest private pleasure to disclaim gratification in his public self). His egotism, which had cut him off from contact with the world, thus diverted, brought him into a growing contact with the world, as he denied himself profit in direct returns. This became the basic operation of his personality.

## Power Operation

It was a power operation, and as he came to perfect it, he established himself as its foremost entrepreneur. He exploited the world's conscience as ruthlessly as any exploiter, but with the significant qualification that he never spared himself. In fact, he had to drive himself always harder, always one step further than he drove the world, for the essence of his power lay in a clear conscience. "I have the right," ran his justification, "to demand this of you. Look—I myself have given more!" But asceticism not only gave him contact with the world; it enabled him to conquer. Suffering as much as he did to gain humility, he could overlook the power aspects of his drive; his empire, he could well believe, was not of the world, but of the inner world of his own instincts.

There is a swindle here, which, from the fact that Gandhi conspired in it all his life, suggests that a man can support an exacting conscience on hardly any self-insight at all. The ordinary dishonest man, the good average citizen who meets all the requirements but does so imperfectly, is much more fearful of conscience than the saint. He assigns himself a limit, beyond which he will not go, and he knows his limit (the saint does not); this knowledge seals his mediocrity, it does not allow him to persist beyond it. Yet the ascetic's hunger for power presupposes a conscience, and an active one; else why should he have to work so hard? Each blow he directs against himself falls to his credit, and this being a gain, it requires another blow, and so on in an infinite regress of pride-in-humility. But somewhere in the course the organism is enfeebled, and when it can endure no more, conscience is satisfied to call a halt. What is saintly in every case, and certainly in Gandhi's, is that the process is halted at a point which for most men would be well beyond death. Thus the saint enters a real immortality, even in his lifetime.

Such was the mechanism of Gandhi's powerful fasts. The nearer he approached death, the greater his power became; the nation would beg him to stop and promise to be good and obey. The fear of the Indians may not only have been due to the great guilt of parricide he stirred up in them ("We have killed Bapu!"); at a deeper level it may have been a fear that the basic moral contradiction of the saint's hunger for, and use of, power would break through to recognition. This would have meant not only the death of "Bapu," the father, but of "Mahatmaji," the honored Great Soul, and with him of the whole system of ideals that his moral strategies had created in the New India. It is noteworthy that Gandhi was assassinated not by Moslems, Communists, or any religious or secular outgroup, but by a member of the Hindu Mahasabha, a fanatical orthodox society and the only one in India that could claim sanctity greater than his own.

A man who wields such power does not come by it overnight. Before he left South Africa he had completed the work on the foundations of his character, which included *Brahmacharya,* "control of the senses in word, thought and deed." (*In thought*—one of his great naive insights was the statement: mind is the root of sensuality.) This meant absolute chastity; he would live with his wife as with a sister, and regard all women as the equals and companions of men, and no longer as objects of lust. (Since sexual intercourse must have seemed to him an act of murderous violence, the ban he imposed on himself with *Brahmacharya* was the symbolic climax to the taboos on eating, destroying, or otherwise injuring flesh.) "Before taking the vow I had been open to being overcome by temptation at any moment. Now the vow was a sure shield against any temptation." He speaks of the joy *Brahmacharya* brought him, for all that it was hard work. Having mastered it, he was secure, he had built the last barrier in a system of defenses against the world, which system, at the next remove, was a defense against his own impulses toward the world, and which was finally to give him command of the world. *Brahmacharya* was a joy because it was the ultimate maneuver in the negotiation of this treaty (such a man must have a genius for politics); it brought the last straggling impulse of life under control, halted the conflict between sexuality and self, and put an end to the struggle between public and private ego. These conflicts, so long as they raged, represented a possible return to direct satisfactions ("temptations"). He was now beyond temptation, and the full price he had asked for the assumption of power, he had himself paid out. Gandhi was now ready to turn his power operation directly on the world with the work of *Satyagraha,* his self-realization in politics.

## The Extraordinary Paradox

EXAMINATION of the self that Gandhi sought to realize can lead one to think that the ascetic need not invent a sinful past; he need only attribute to the past the sins of the present, which the process of acquiring sainthood brings him to commit. Much of him is merely absurd, and this amuses us and endears the great man to us. But much of him is overbearing, insensitive, and even brutal. Our original question—"How can he have emerged uncrippled from the crippling life he led?" becomes, "How can he have been so crippled, seeing that he emerged whole?"

The simpleton in him, wanting to save money, decided to launder his own shirts. "So I equipped myself with a washing outfit. . . . I bought a book on washing, studied the art and taught it also to my wife. This no doubt added to my work, but its novelty made it a pleasure." He describes the first collar he laundered. He had used too much starch and pressed it with an iron that was not hot enough. "The superfluous starch continually dropped off it." All the same, he wore the collar to court, to the amusement of his colleagues. He was impervious to ridicule (at the cost of being ridiculous—but that's actually a saving to a Don Quixote) and was glad of the chance to provide his friends with some fun at his own expense. But even here, charming as this incident is, he was far from innocent, for Gandhi was still engaged in scoring his characteristic point. He wears his collar with a straight face as an example of the "beauty of self-help," and must feel an increment of humility trickling to his credit. His whole character is here reproduced in miniature.

One frequently finds him buying a book on some household subject, mastering it, and then teaching it to his wife—for this, one must be a Gandhi. He instinctively believes that the world is authoritarian, run on principles as solemn as his own, and it is respect for authority and desire to conform that make him humble himself in a way that only an idiot or a nobleman can afford. In these small, simple things (as also, for example, with his opinions on handwriting, where he expresses his regret, at the height of his career, that he had neglected to improve his penmanship, and adds, "Let every young man and woman be warned by my example and understand that good handwriting is a necessary part of education") he surprises us by betraying the kind of mentality at which the self-help ads in the pulp magazines are aimed.

It is otherwise when a moral issue is involved. Then this spendthrift of good name who prospers on ridicule cannot resist a proud show: the temptation to act on principle is the one thing his vanity is not armored against. I imagine him interrupting his practice of sweetness and gentle humility; his favorite prayer to Rama goes dead on his lips, the spinning wheel is abandoned. Still with a sweet smile—which now has the tension of a bird dog on the point—he turns to his old friend and disciple, Kallenbach, during an ocean voyage to London, to persuade him that possession is evil, and that Kallenbach, accordingly, ought to get rid of "the pair or two" of expensive binoculars he brought with him on the trip. The discussion goes on for several days; at last Kallenbach throws the binoculars overboard to put an end to Gandhi's nagging. And Gandhi is himself persuaded that the power of pure love has again prevailed.

Or the presents that the Indian community of South Africa has given to him and his wife when the Gandhis are about to return to their native land. Gandhi, who as a public servant will accept no reward for his work, returns his own present and argues that Kasturbai is bound to do the same. Her present, some expensive jewelry, has been given not for her work but in recognition of his; her acceptance would therefore constitute his taking payment for his services. Kasturbai replies, with very good reason, that without her toiling and moiling for him, his public work would have been impossible. Besides, she does not want the jewels for herself, but for her sons, who will some day marry; let them have the jewels as a wedding present for their wives. His sons, answers Gandhi, shall not want to marry girls who care for ornaments—"Will you, boys?" The boys, of course, agree with papa, Kasturbai is overwhelmed, the jewels are cashed and the money derived from them is put aside in a trust fund for the Indians of South Africa. Which is no doubt a noble action—but all the same, poor Kasturbai.

Or when his ten-year-old son, Manilal, lies dying of typhoid and pneumonia (the same incident is repeated whenever a member of the family is very ill, and several times with Kasturbai). The doctor, a Parsee, advises Gandhi that medicine can do the boy little good; the only hope is to sustain his strength by giving him nourishing food, which means eggs and chicken broth. Gandhi replies that he is a vegetarian and that his religion does not permit him to use meat or eggs. Had Manilal been of age, Gandhi would have consulted his wishes; but as he has to decide for him, he will not allow his son this sacrilege. He is conscious of the risk; but it is precisely at times like this that a man's faith is put on trial, and Gandhi prefers to place his faith in God and not compromise his honor. He gives Manilal hydropathic treatments, with hip-baths, and keeps him on orange juice diluted with water. But the boy's fever rises to 104 degrees, with delirium at night. "I began to get anxious. What would people say of me? What would my elder brother think? . . . What right had parents to inflict their fads on their children?" But Gandhi comforts himself with the thought that God must surely be pleased with his faith. He continues his own kind of treatment and Manilal, such being his father's luck, recovers. Gandhi rejoices that he has not had to compromise his principles, and fails to observe that he was willing to sacrifice his son's life to vain honor. This is the same brave man, all of a piece, whom the threat of violence never deterred, and who lived by the Sermon on the Mount.

### Force without Force

SATYAGRAHA or "truth-force" is the non-violent form of struggle to gain an objective without injuring flesh or compromising the truth. Truth, for Gandhi, had a curious connotation; it meant what it means for all, but it was also the name he gave to his own life-process, the conversion of self-denial into power. *Satyagraha* is the same conversion turned outward, with public objects standing in place of the inner life. It was an act of genius on his part to recognize that politics need be nothing more than the simple extension of psychic economy. Away with governments, legislatures, police; the regime a man follows in conducting his own life is the sufficient model for society. Gandhi's anarchism is obscured by the stress he placed on moral authority; nevertheless, he always acknowledged his debt to Thoreau and Tolstoy.

That his own character was the model for his politics can be seen from the many parallels between his life-process and his social principles. His famous preference for primitive household and village economies over centralized modes of production, his love of the spinning wheel and hatred of modern machine industry, are symbolic continuations of his inner denial of direct power impulses; and they impose the ascetic form upon society. His opposition to science is of the same order; he saw in it a rationalization of power that threatened his own. From his masochistic identification with the lowest of the low, one may derive his campaign for the abolition of untouchability; and so on, the list could be extended over his whole career. There was hardly a position he held, a gesture he made, which was not the logical outcome of his character structure. And while his actual politics may have been, at times, as inconsistent as any politician's, it is a blessing to deal with someone like Gandhi, for you know the man is not improvising. The mode is love: he gives himself. So also with the instrument of struggle he made out of truth in *Satyagraha;* it was the highest paradox of his non-violence, the achievement of force without force.

His softness of approach was deceiving. It concealed, as his violent death made clear, a dangerous force in and about him, for which the British, in their own terms, were quite right to keep Gandhi so many years of his life in jail. While Gandhi meant by *Satyagraha,* literally, the force of truth, to the British, and even to the masses who followed him, it was more the other way round. The civil disobedience movement had a thrilling, crackling atmosphere of thunderstorm; without this high potential of violence, pacifism is mere church. Yet this force was generated by the same methods that had led, in his own case, to peaceful self-rule. With the peace he had won by repressing all violence in himself, he must have developed a partial blindness; his attitude on the occasions when he called off the civil disobedience movement because of the sporadic bloodshed it caused would suggest that he was not all along aware that he was handling fire.

For his own part, Gandhi relied on the power of truth alone, and he did so neither in sentimentality nor naivety. He came to it experienced and assured. He had already achieved by these means empire over his instincts—an empire to which nothing military can compare; and round this empire he had built an unbreachable defense in depth—vegetarianism, non-violence, dietary and medical quackery (the word is his own; it is the most charming aspect of his defense that he can laugh at it, to make it appear light), self-control in word, thought, and deed, overtowering it all with *Brahmacharya.* Only then did this empire turn its might outward to bring the world under its sway.

The war of *Satyagraha* began, which he was to wage the rest of his life against war itself, British rule, the subjugation of India by poverty, disease, color and religious prejudice, untouchability. The public self that commanded this war fought joyously, and at the public level we see only the ego's armament, forged and beaten and polished to shine like love—it is light and mobile, it suggests nothing of the pain and fear and self-abuse of the deprivations, the sickness of life that attended its manufacture. We are amazed that so much satisfaction should lie in war. And the greatest achievement of this emperor is that this was a real satisfaction to him, one that called out a natural smile and laugh. When the world offered itself, surrendering its egotism, its pride and lust, he received it as a child does a toy.

He had long been prepared for the gift of India, having anticipated the surrender by making its masses part of himself, by living and dressing like them, sharing and outdoing their poverty and starvation and religious observances (fortified in these ordeals, especially in the later years, by some of India's greatest millionaires. A photograph of the entire estate Gandhi left behind at his death—it serves as a frontispiece to the autobiography—shows a spittoon, a prayer book, a pair of eyeglasses, two pairs of sandals, a watch, some eating implements, and a statuette of the three monkeys, "Say No Evil, See No Evil, Hear No Evil"; he was living at the time in Birla Mansion). Now politics, like diet, sex, and medicine, was brought down to the level where he could attack it directly, as empirical a matter as a woman's cooking. It became an issue, like any other, of character—and as simple. What truth is there in the opponent's words and in his life? How does he live? How can he be persuaded? How shamed into obedience of the spirit of his own words? How forced into taking advantage of India's willingness to endure suffering until he himself is worn down by the hardships he imposes? The enemy in this war was an empire, but Gandhi refused to recognize armies, battleships and parliaments, official ranks and dignities. He persisted in fighting it, exasperatingly, man to man: I, Mohandas Gandhi, am a man, and you, Lord Viceroy, are a man. Over and over again he extended his smiling, patient, eager invitation to the battle, until many a representative of abstract power learned in panic that one could take no abstract measures against so concrete a human being.

*Satyagraha* worked. For all that might be said in qualification—that the British Empire conspired in its success, having been vulnerable to opinion, or that it yielded not to *Satyagraha* but to its own internal pressures; that *Satyagraha* might have worked better without Gandhi who, on at least two occasions, called off the movement, as it was reaching full effectiveness, in punishment for minor infractions of the rule against violence; that Gandhi neither aided nor interfered with the historical outcome, the events of which took place on their own level, without reference to his values—all the same, *Satyagraha* worked. In a country so deviceless as India, this poor device must appear an inspiration; it converted every weakness—ignorance, disease, religious fear and superstition—into a national resource. And much of the credit for its success, however qualified, belongs to Gandhi's shrewdness as a politician. He had the insight to incorporate a material demand in every one of his spiritual principles (whether in the handy strategy of the Khadar movement for the wearing of homespun cloth, or the heroic "March to the Sea" to break the British salt laws, in principle, the whole struggle for *Swaraj*, self-rule, had long before been privately carried out by Gandhi); and this was not so much politics as nature, for he had always practiced a kind of materialism in relating his spiritual experiments to daily life. Moreover, the moral success of *Satyagraha* was assured at the outset. Self-realization through politics—with this desire, Gandhi brought life into a field that stinks of death. For this alone, may the God whom he never succeeded in seeing face to face keep his name alive.

## Self-Realization Impossible in Politics

But who ever heard of such a thing? Politicians have hobbies, they paint, collect stamps; they "go in" for self-realization in the manner of the middle class, home from the office. The self does not exist on the job.

Political realities and the realities of the self are absolutely opposed. From the perspective of the self, politics is unreal, and the more closely it approaches the level of *Realpolitik,* the more it becomes an illusion. Gandhi's politics had less than any other man's to do with bureaucracies, papers, and laws; it consisted of personal realities. Still, this unique practice did not succeed. Politics was not the way of self-realization; it was Gandhi's defense against knowing himself.

It is remarkable that someone with so high an ego-ideal, and so unsparing of himself as Gandhi, should have remained so blind to the most obvious traits of his own character. But if he had discovered, say, the power aspects of his asceticism, he would have been paralyzed. This must not happen, and to prevent it, he turned to politics. In politics one can always claim objective necessity for the personal act; it is a refuge from introspection and from too much truth. Now a man like Gandhi, committed to self-realization, but in no position to afford complete knowledge of himself, must have had some such reason (among others) for entering politics—to keep intact, and out of consciousness, the power of his ego regime. Self-realization, in the sense of knowledge, is impossible in politics.

But what is self-realization? *Gnothi seauton* ("know thyself") has given the West an extraordinary philosophical conceit. Self-realization must concern our deepest desire, and who will say this is to know ourselves? Gandhi, on the sly, bypassed Socrates; and even when he was clear of him, he tried to cover, through faith, a deficiency of knowledge. Politics was for him a branch of religion, and actually in religion he found self-realization, though it was characteristic of him to seek it in every part of life. But before speaking of his religious life, we must consider our psychological assumptions.

## Character and Culture

Thus far we have been examining in Gandhi's case the operation of a psychological system whose purpose was the aggrandizement of the ego by indirect means, which it achieved by converting self-denial into power. One could go on indefinitely showing the articulation of this system without gaining any new insight. The psychology of the ego has its limits, and once it has demonstrated the particular principle by which experience is made to serve the self, its work is done. Such analysis is exhaustive only when, in the given subject's life, there is nothing beyond the self and the self-regarding values.

It would be a mistake to argue that Gandhi, or any other man with mystical and religious impulses as deep as his, was such a thoroughgoing egotist. It is far simpler to grant some autonomy to the religious life, freeing it, to that extent, from service to power, and to admit that some of the things a man gives to God may have no strings attached. The difficulty in trying to make the whole world revolve about the ego with its power impulses (the so-called "will to power" philosophies) is that, as in Ptolemaic astronomy, too many complicated epicycles become necessary to account for apparent motion in other directions (e.g., an endless play upon selfless acts to show their selfish motivation, for nothing in this system, not even joy in natural beauty, can be selfless). A new center of explanation is needed if the religious life and related phenomena which do not easily fit the power system are to have any reality of their own; and here it is precisely the psychoanalytic perspective that would release the spiritual from subservience to the practical, by basing it on independent ground in sexuality.

I shall assume that Gandhi's sexual energy, which found no direct expression after he had taken the vow of *Brahmacharya* in his middle thirties, did not entirely go to work for his ego. (To assume, with the concept of sublimation, that it did so go to work, is to land once more among the epicycles of ego psychology. Other reasons for discarding the concept in Gandhi's case, I shall mention later.) Some part of his sexuality must have remained free, and it was this free energy which found mystical expression in his religious life. Here one must follow Freud and Reich in their interpretation of the dominant mystical symbolism, the yearning for union with God, as a sign of sexual longing.

## Instinct and Sainthood

IN THIS hunger for instinctual satisfaction lies the genuine capacity for self-realization beyond the ego, beyond the power principle; the sexual drive is anyway deeper than the ego's and in some part independent of it—the more so with the ascetic, who has all along given it no place among the activities of the self. But there must be a "descent into hell" in every such life; shamed, despised, and avoided, sex becomes the condition of salvation. Only when denied sexuality breaks through in religious form is it possible for the ascetic to achieve self-transcendence. In posing the mystical ideal of *Moksha,* for union with God, he has already established contact, albeit roundabout, with the sexual forces. So much of life is restored to him; and as the long repressed sexual desire grows, so grows also its conscious, and only possible, representation: the desire for dissolving union with the divine. Both "hell" and "heaven" have this in common—that there, and only there, is the dissolution of the self accomplished; in the sexual orgasm, and in the standing face to face with God.

The depth of Gandhi's religious feeling must not be underestimated. Without his religious life, without his submerged sexuality deeply at work, he would indeed have been life-hater and crank, the mere eccentric. But he had his center, the same center round which India's serious spiritual experiments have always turned. It was his longing for sexual gratification represented by *Moksha* that connected him with life, and the form this longing took that placed him, whether or not he wanted the honor, among the saints.

It is necessary to remember that Gandhi was a perfectly centered man, directly in the heart of a spiritual tradition. Only so can we rid ourselves of the notion that, in spite of what his contemporaries say, he must have been flinty and severe. His irreducible severities, the arrogant humility, the failure to feel for others stand, and are not to be explained away. But what requires explanation now, as a final contradiction restores to the man all the joy of life he would seem to have sacrificed to the ego-ideal, is the fact with which we began: the delightful smile, the infectious laugh, the radiation of lightheartedness. How does a man who followed such a difficult way of privation and suffering, so far from the course of sexual satisfaction our psychology must prescribe, attain this peace? I take it for granted the smile is genuine, not a mask of bitterness. He could not, wearing a mask, bring a breath of fresh air with him and lighten the atmosphere when he entered a room, nor could he suggest anything childlike and full of charm.

Gandhi's centrality brings to mind one answer: he did not go his way alone as the neurotics do who deny themselves without reason in an increasing ignorance, misery, and loneliness; he had the Indian solidarity to draw on, of martyrs and religious men, among whom he found a precedent and a reason for each intimate detail of his conduct of life. The smile thus acquires the joy of an accomplished work, a work which has dignity and social value. But how is this acquisition made; how does any way of life in accord with an ideal, and opposed to nature, so secure its values as to seem natural?

This question seems to me the most difficult of all, for it leads us into a direct confrontation with the whole man, Gandhi, with the theme, so to speak, of his life, instead of the partial phrases that are comparatively easy to follow. Every life has a theme, and the theme of the great life raises questions, to answer which one must advance the actual frontiers of knowledge. It is a simple enough matter to follow anyone's career in the broad, rough encounters with the world that make up the province of egotism; even to go one step further and find in sexuality a principle beyond the ego, applicable to the understanding of the religious life, is no very original accomplishment, as the course had been marked by Freud and in recent years gone over repeatedly. But to go beyond that, in analysis as in life, is as hard as it is rare. It is precisely this in which Gandhi's greatness lies, and in which he has few peers: that he performed a basic operation on life, converting everything natural to the ideal with such success that in his case one must almost create a special category—this life of artifice and regulation by the will represents a new species of nature. It need not come to this, for the measure of other such wonderful things has always, in time, been found. But we stand too close to Gandhi, and perhaps the knowledge on which we must rely is also too young an instrument. For all the work that has been done in psychology and the various departments of social science, a clear theory of culture and character in their influence upon each other is still lacking. But every day in works of art, particularly in the symbolism of religious productions, and more commonly, in our ordinary intercourse with people we love, we see this connection, a streaming into each other of life and value in a single experience. No hypothesis of social science has yet been worth (perhaps never will be) a single moment of the experience in which this connection is found, however vaguely.

## Man and Culture

We are bound to look for the contribution a man's culture makes to his life; and let us suppose a closer continuity between character and culture than has hitherto been imagined, an actual *physical* contact, in the hope of understanding Gandhi. That India has traditionally been the home of the great ascetics, the fakirs and saints, is platitude, but a fresh truth can be forced out of it. Let us suppose that a special environment can, somehow (but *how?*), raise man's pretense to the life of pure spirit to a higher degree of reality (to the degree, at least, that the usual skepticism of spiritual claims as a system of deceits and rationalizations must be abandoned). Now spirituality may have a neurotic as well as a hypocritical connotation; the latter falls away in our supposition, the former remains. Neurotic is neurotic the world over, even where it represents standard behavior: it is a way of life (Gandhi's is the supreme example) in which sexual satisfaction is impossible. In a culture like our own an unequivocal value cannot be assigned to neurosis, for the culture itself is contradictory with respect to sex, urging its members on in a riot of stimulations, while it upholds conventional and moral restraints and taboos. But in the India at least of Gandhi's childhood and youth a homogeneous accretion of value to neurosis must have been possible. The mere existence of such a thing in India as Yoga (not that Gandhi was a Yogi, though he may have practiced some of its exercises), and the fact that Yoga enjoyed prestige, was enough to give security to the ascetic's task and absorb his neurosis into the religious atmosphere.

This relationship between man and culture is not a haphazard one. In India it has worked itself out in a startlingly detailed and organized way, as an illustration from the Yoga system of breathing may show. It has been noted that a disturbance of breathing, with the chest held in a high, fixed, inspiratory position, failing to move with exhalation, is typical of many neurotics (cf. Wilhelm Reich, *Character Analysis, The Func-*

*tion of the Orgasm*). The purpose of this is apparently to deaden bodily feelings, a convenient unconscious device in a society where natural sex behavior meets disapproval. Now in Yoga the same mechanism is consciously developed, for the same purpose—to deaden bodily feelings and prepare the way for disembodiment of spirit, the so-called "perception of immateriality." The exercises of Yoga would seem to be a training of the nervous system to complete the process of withdrawal from life which every neurotic unconsciously carries out on his own. It is a comment on the culture as a whole that a religious discipline should have such deep insight into the problem of psycho-physical unity, and strike on such an effective way of establishing its values within its adherents. The contact between character and culture is so much more intimate than it is in the West, with our traditional dualism, which has been almost wholly determined by religion.

## The Mystery

THE significant point toward the solution of the problem raised by Gandhi's life is that a culture whose values can find direct, physical representation can be counted on to provide a re-routing of the repressed sexual energies through some form other than mere neurotic symptom formation. Nothing can make a man feel so much at home in the world as to realize that not only the role he has created for himself has value for his time, but that his very being, his whole underground, unconscious, instinctual life also belongs, in its most private aspect, without shame, to the universe of man. There is bound to be joy in this, and an end of the usual loneliness.

Obviously, we are dealing with something far beyond the reach of sublimation; this mechanism would at best account for the appearance of sexual energy in some substitute form or activity, but not for its spontaneous emergence as the joy of life. In Gandhi's case we may have to consider the possibility of "transublimation," a sublimation that does return to the original goal—and though this shifts to the second word the difficulty of the first, the suggestion of transcendence is relevant. One may expect that somehow in the life he led, extraordinarily integrated with his culture, the cultural forms—singularly concrete things of body and nerve and sexual representation—poured back into him the energy he spent in quest of *Moksha*. Certainly this energy undergoes a transfusion as the man becomes one with his ideal; the principles take on life and flow through his veins; the ideal world is conquered by an act of submission, a complete surrender in the body to the claims of spirit. But the remarkable thing is that this energy also remained unchanged. From its first transformation into a spiritual value it ascended through a curving hierarchy to come back to itself: what began with nature returned to nature. This should be sufficient for *Moksha*.

And perhaps Gandhi did achieve *Moksha* after all. Part of the definition he somewhere gave of this term was that of a state in which the distinction between action and contemplation disappears; a man who has achieved it and contains all in himself, the contradictions resolved, need only contemplate, and from the contemplation the action will flow of itself. Gandhi's contemplation was active, it had a tremendous attractive force; so much so, that it may not be stretching a point too far to say he attained the kind of mythical existence the great characters of literature enjoy, whose essence is their whole existence.

But there is time for the myth. The actual man, the physical Gandhi, still confronts us, and his example is strongly persuasive. But of what? Can culture really become nature? How does a man go against life and return to it, distorted but whole, with the satisfactions that failed in the beginning marvelously restored? There is something mythical, nevertheless, about this journey; I cannot explain it; the last step in the transaction between character and culture is missing, at least in my own understanding. What we cannot explain is a mystery. This, the living, childlike smile, so unlike the smile of the Sphinx, and yet of the same enormous silence, is for me the mystery of Gandhi.

# ISRAEL'S MODERN POETRY

## *New Voices, New Modes of Speech*

### HERBERT HOWARTH

IT MIGHT be said that a fourth generation of writers is just rising in Israel. There are the old masters who are dead; the old masters who are still alive; then there are men and women who have grown to literary maturity over the last twenty years, but still retain something of the zest of youth; and now the new voices just beginning to make themselves heard.

The character of the first generation, and its stature, are summed up in the names of Tschernichowsky and Bialik. It is the generation that founded the new Hebrew literature in the Russia of the age of the Hovevei Zion ("Lovers of Zion"), in those days of cultural ferment when so many diverse impulses flowed on Odessa. Tschernichowsky and Bialik were poets of the sort who live long and go on producing fresh and striking poems down to the very end. In passing they left a corpus of work that has become classic and serves as the background of succeeding generations.

Their immediate successors were the men who are still the living old masters. They made for themselves a Hebrew which, if it lacks the liveliness of today, is a consummate and mellow instrument. They are still writing poems in this medium. Only recently one of the foremost of them, Yaakov Fichman, printed a love sonnet:

> *The heart still trembles, flowers if a spark,*
> *The merest spark of unguessed love lights on*
> *it. . . .*

But Fichman and those with him are so much masters as to be almost outside the current of present events. After the changes of the last years, changes in speech, changes in experience, modulations in the attitudes of the young to the problems of living, the older writers are invested with some of the splendor and some of the petrifaction of history. They can scarcely answer the new questions in the new idiom.

THEN come men whose names are met repeatedly in the press and periodicals of Tel Aviv, the writers who have been the spokesmen of Israel through the last ten years.

The literary critic of *Haaretz,* Y. Zamora, has recently given expression to popular opinion in singling out Uri Zvi Greenberg and Nathan Alterman as the outstanding figures in this group. They are contrasting and complementary. Uri Zvi Greenberg is the *laudator temporis acti;* he would have the ancient Israel restored in every detail, down to the sacrifice of the kid before the feast; "he dwells night and day in the tents of our past, thence drawing his symbols, thence his steady view. . . ." Alterman is at home in the present and all ages of the past; he treats all periods on their merits, going to each and questioning it, eliciting its help in molding the future. Stylistically there are corresponding differences between these two: in Greenberg an immense creative violence; in Alterman a lucid freedom, skill in handling either a polemical ballad

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HERBERT HOWARTH, who reports here on current trends in Israeli poetry, speaks from an intimate knowledge of the works and the personalities involved in his subject. Mr. Howarth is a young English poet, born in Blackpool, England, in 1917. He has published a book of translations from the Arabic, *Images from the Arab World,* and has recently completed a book, as yet unpublished, telling of his experiences in Palestine. Readers will recall his articles "An Evening with Israel's Poets" (November 1949) and "Jewish Art and the Fear of the Image" (February 1950). A selection of translations from recent Israeli poetry follows Mr. Howarth's article, beginning on page 148.

or a piece of private symbolism in free verse. The achievements of these two men, taken together, could serve as a statement of the cultural situation of the last two decades in Israel, though in such a summary there would always remain unaccounted for certain work which lies quite outside the spirit of the time, like Agnon's.

Now the new voices become audible, attempting new modes of speech. Many new and interesting volumes of poetry are coming from the presses. In the newspapers, which proportionately give perhaps more space to cultural topics than do the dailies of any other country, poetry is being published in some quantity. It is the purpose of this short article to single out some of the characteristics common to the new poems, and to try to sense the direction in which the minds of writers are turning after the trauma of war, the attainment of independence.

A GLANCE through an assortment of a year's poetry shows a wide range of forms in use, a sign of the experimental spirit. The Hebrew language has been made flexible. The poet who wants to use free verse can be as free as he likes. Thus a poet like Sando David writes in sequences of short suggestive half-phrases, dispensing with syntax which would close the meaning. Poems in this style—and they are frequent—would scarcely have been possible at one time, before living associations had coalesced round words through popular daily usage: remember how long English poetry took to admit this technique, how long it was before it came into Arabic poetry in Andalusia. Of course medieval Hebrew poetry had relied extensively on the activation of all the memories and history attached to a Biblical phrase, and that technique has been carried through into modern Hebrew poetry, but the tapping of scriptural associations alone would not have produced these poems, which often depend a good deal on personal romanticism. On the other hand, lively ambiguities and the counter-play of associations sometimes come into the new poetry from the joint presence of Biblical and contemporary allusions.

Besides the poets of free form, there are others who, like their European contemporaries, now prefer to harness themselves in tight compact stanzas. Often the consequence of choosing a very close-fitting stanza is obscurity, but also cohesion, force, and irony. Such poems are the hardest to translate, at least if the form is to be preserved, for it is seldom possible to present the double meanings with equal economy. There is, for instance, a poem by Tuvia Gelblum about "Meeting the Commander a Year Later." The "Commander" is the famous young archeologist and soldier Yigal Yadin. Yigal means literally "he will deliver," and this literal significance is a pivot of the poem: "We saluted him, friend, commander, eagle of our deliverance." The energy of these tricks, the cavalier treatment of words, and the rapid shift of ideas, have the effect of producing, even within the tightest of forms, a sensation of freedom.

Energy liberated, active, and free-ranging: that is the first impression given by the literature of today. But this freedom is not the sort you would think of if you heard the word in another context. There is little rapture about it, little joy. Or if joy, not an uncomplicated joy.

The relative absence of oversimplified joy is in fact a sign of the serious quality of the current poetry. Anyone who has watched the formation of images in the soul of Israel during the last troubled decade, observing the delicate and complex struggle between the humane and what was usually called the "chauvinistic," might have feared the outburst of a certain over-exuberance over the realization of the Jewish state. True, there is amid the whole mass of literature produced since the closing days of the mandate a certain modicum of the banal cliché. Gelblum's lines to Yigal are not absolutely untinctured by it. Mordechai Temkin has one or two poems about the nation as a bereaved mother. Someone has taken the trouble to turn into Hebrew Tennyson's jingle about "The Charge of the Light Brigade." But only a modicum of all this. The notable thing is that often the joy is expressed in startling and ambivalent images; that other tones are mingled with it, enriching it; that there is a groping for a profound humanism; and that emotions are followed beyond the moment of their begetting to speculation about the future and the responsibilities that freedom brings in its train.

There is the dark side of contemporary feelings, too. The original late-19th-century Zionism, which produced the literature of the first generation, was the child of light. It opened its arms to all the light and beauty of the world, turned its back on the shadows and wished to leave them behind. Of all the perfectionist visions, it was among the kindest and best, and one cannot wish it to have been otherwise than it was. Yet it may be that the struggle in Israel today between the humane and the selfish has derived in part from this primary fission between light and dark.

One way in which the writer today attempts to emphasize his choice of a dark mood in place of the optimistic idealism of the past is by borrowing and transforming some key phrase from Bialik or Tschernichowsky. For example, it is sometimes said that the modern florescence of Hebrew poetry is typically expressed in Bialik's lyric *"El Ha-Tsippor,"* describing the sudden coming to awareness in him of hope and the love of nature when a bird appears at his window. In a poem of today this poem is remembered with all its feelings transposed to another key: the eager spontaneous delight is dramatized and wilfully dogmatized into apocalypse and tears. This is in Pinchas Sadeh's "Proverbs of the Virgins":

*The birds above drink blood when sunset burns*
*They will not range far abroad.*
*And my thoughts and dreams also grow dark at dusk.*

Similarly, Aharon Mirski, writing a poem about his poems, tells how "nature songs have turned to sulphur and burning in my saliva." He echoes and defies a song that appeared fifty years ago in Tchernichowsky's first little volume and which the young Jewry of South Russia immediately began singing; the song, "Laugh at All My Dreams," prophesied how out of the dreams of the Lovers of Zion a new and glorious art would grow in Palestine: "A new song will a new poet sing, Alive to different, distant beauty." Now that fifty years have uncurtained their terrors—which outnumber, as it may seem to men at war, their lovely growths—Mirski reshapes the message of 1898, making it:

*My new song is a curse. I will sing it forever,*
*Sweet to my soul as howls to the howling mourner. . . .*

In his last verse he sounds the knell of the idealist epoch:

*Fled are the songs we loved, dashed with nocturnal dew,*
*Songs for the flowers, the scented wood, and the shadows cool.*
*Every hill that we loved when young has become Mount Azazel. . . .*

In words like these the nation wrote its inner history, reflecting the changes brought about by the last desperate crises before the state was snatched into being.

The image of Mount Azazel in the last fragment provides an illustration of the way the associations work in these poems. It is rough, deserted wilderness—a common image of this war, induced by the actual experience of the grim hills and deserts where the fighting took place. Specifically, it is the frowning wilderness into which the expiatory ram was sent. This also, the idea of expiation, is a common feature of the war psychosis: the young people have gone into the hills to fight and fall as an act of expiation on behalf of the whole people. Further, Azazel is the abode of the evil demons; and it is actually the center of a region from which trouble came to Israel throughout the past.

This binding together of several layers of meaning is normal to poetry and its functioning. But it is to gain a useful fresh angle on this procedure to watch it at work in modern Hebrew. There is a poem by L. Strauss whose title means literally "Daughter of My Voice." This carries the ideas of "echo," of "the inner person speaking," of "inspiration," and of "the voice of God heard through His chosen medium." As a whole the poem is probably secular in principle, an image of the discovery of the self, but many of the allusions used in formulating the image are clearly religious. We are being constantly reminded, by prayer patterns and phrases from the liturgy, that, much as the secular has been brought into present-day Hebrew poetry, the religious past nevertheless strongly persists in it. The reasons, involving the history of Hebrew as a language, are obvious.

But sometimes another world of the past, the Yiddish world, is also there in recent Israeli poetry. And Yiddish effects worked into Hebrew often produce strange and vivid colorations. So it is in a striking piece published last year by Aharon Mirski, which makes up for what it may lack in polish by its strength, indignation, and brilliant clashes of ideas. To reproduce the mood of the verb in the title, one would have to render it "The Whole Town Went Themselves"—evidently the ironic reflexive of Yiddish—or perhaps "The Whole Town Put Itself Out." A dead man, fallen in the war, is being buried. Everyone follows the funeral. Everyone rejoices secretly that this man's death has paid off the expiation due from the rest, and that by attending the funeral each can complete the payment without further expense of life. The poem is full of wilful double meanings, like:

*Our doubting souls force us to fable from*
*men we know:—*
*What fable dare I draw for a soul that has*
*perished so?*

The Hebrew of the final words of the couplet—and the whole poem is in violent satirical rhyming couplets—is *"et-nafsho l'hakdish."* It may simply refer to the man who is being buried, for whom Kaddish must be said. It may refer to him in the sense of a "sacrificed soul"—the dead man in his fineness. Or it may mean "a soul that needs Kaddish"—the "dead soul" of the public.

Pain and atonement are the main themes on the darker side. Atonement is a principle deeply embedded in Jewish living, and the emotions surrounding it have been stirred by the war with the Arabs—they have not been lessened by the fact that the war has been fought to a successful conclusion. On the one hand, the anger of a man like Mirski with the mass who have hugged security, letting a youthful few atone for them; on the other, a sometimes overwrought shame, on the part of men who have not died, that they have let others perform this atonement. Mordecai Temkin has a poem that elaborates the consequences of this latter feeling:

*Fate did not want me, did not choose me*
*To bleed and fall for the land that forged me.*
*Daily I must repay, daily atone. . . .*
*In every death let me divine my own.*

It should perhaps be commented here that we are not necessarily to assume that the attitude of this poem will be lived out in its literal terms, any more than we are to take Mirski's satire on the community at its face value. Is it not a task of poetry to articulate the problems of the group it speaks for, to liberate its makers and readers from an unconscious acting out of tendencies that a situation has induced, to help them to see themselves and so move forward from the situation more consciously?

THESE broader considerations should especially be applied to poems which seek to lift the immediate problem to the plane of "eternity." I am thinking of Pinhas Sadeh's poem about the "Sad Virgins," translated in full in the group of poems accompanying this article. There are patches of rhetoric in the poem, patches that are suspect in their use of "eternity" and "God," but the poem develops a parable of beautiful tone and splendid relevance to Israel's trauma of self-fulfilment. It strives to be a revelation, and it strives a little too hard and does not become quite that, but in its closing parable it achieves perfection in one of the loveliest and most humane of forms.

At the opposite extreme to an apocalyptic essay like this are the simple direct statements of personal grief, of which there are many today. Esther Rav tells how two parents go to their son's grave when the spring flowers are coming out. They look for the violets which he loved, as if to make their eyes serve as organs of sight for the dead man's spirit. But everywhere they see anemones, and are shocked by the profusion of red, looking like spurts of blood over the grass.

Yehoshua Rabinov has published a volume, *Mul Ha-Akeda,* poems mourning his eighteen-year-old daughter who was killed in the war:

*Dividing and dispersing into distance*
*All paths somewhere meet again.*
*But no path brings back your joyful step*
*And as ever the clouds ride the heavens*
*Unaware that sounding death has delved into me.*

In this "fourth generation" of poets I number not only those who are new because they are young, but older writers, too, who because of the changing problems of Israel have begun to speak with new voices, having perhaps never before spoken creatively, or successfully at a creative level. Among these works, the moving product of personal losses, I have long placed Reuven Grossman's poem on the death of his son, one of the first of the war period. I used to know Reuven Grossman in Tel Aviv as an able and distinguished translator from English to Hebrew, but up till then he had not succeeded equally with work of his own. The poem he wrote for his son Noah is full of dignity, and to that is added something of the delighted exaltation which the young people of Israel felt and which their parents loved in them. It tells, for instance, how he used to go with his friends

*Among the evening hills in the nights of Judah,*
*No voice being heard but the bidding of the Maccabees of old.*

His parents, who were grateful for this gift of youth in him, resolve themselves to the same gladness

*—For the death with a kiss*
*At the mouth of Mathathias the Hasmonean*
*With which Thou didst favor him*
*When he ascended the holy ladder. . . .*[*]

The theme of "the kiss of death" is much used at present, sometimes as beautifully as in the lines just quoted, sometimes with a patriotism of a less healthy kind:

*Only by the kiss of death*
*Completion comes to the living.*

**D**IFFICULTIES, losses, grief are not new in Sharon or Galilee, and the images currently evoked to express them are extensions of images that have been familiar there for three decades. But the emergence of the state, though so long desired and anticipated, came with all the sharp astonishment of a new experience. The mind sought images to carry it. Some have been drawn from the landscapes in which men went to fight—rock-strewn, clefted hills and expanses peculiarly fitted to throw back the projected fantasies of a soul, of man or nation, in parturition. Some are drawn from that old and regular source, the Bible. The images are often energetic, often contorted and ambiguous in a rich sense. In Kamzan's brilliant fantasy, given in full later (p. 148), the flag of Zion, broken at an embassy masthead, is at once the copper serpent of Sinai, the false God, and also the glory which Ezekiel saw by the river of Kebar.

Kamzan's poem tells how in a city of the

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[*] The passages from this poem are translated by L. V. Snowman.

Exile a crowd gathers to watch the flag raised. As it watches a vision is granted to it, a vision based on the great prophetic chariot metaphor of the Bible. In the description of the chariot and charioteer, converted to fit the landscape and properties of Eastern Europe, Kamzan allows himself strokes of comedy, the essentially serious comedy of dream. And out of this comedy the poem derives energy and becomes acceptable as an apostrophe of the birth of the state and the "end of evil days." The chariot, curving across the horizons, comes to rest in the vicinity of Haifa amid the community known as Kfar Hasidim, a devoutly Mizrachi village deliberately chosen here for the sake of its name and because it is wholly agricultural. The guardians of Elijah's cave are witnesses of the miracle.

Mirski invokes Elijah at the climax of his funeral satire:

*Watch their faces as they chant! Hear their responses! If*
*That man did not lie dead, who could ever believe*
*That Elijah went to the desert or Jews from Poland came*
*To bring the Messiah down in a chariot of souls aflame?*

Mirski and Kamzan are men aiming at the highest effects. There is, as always, the alternative extreme, the men who are suddenly prompted to write personal simple accounts of what they saw, how they felt. Shlomo Tanai has published one or two slight, pleasing poems, now document, now marching song, whose content is partly reportage, partly the cliché of triumphant patriotism. An occasional touch of humor in his verses does something to redeem the banality. When he reaches the Gulf of Akaba as one of a fighting column of boys and girls, he writes:

*Out of Tanach*
*King Solomon laughs*
*At the girls on the shore.*
*Had he been in Palmach*
*He'd have stepped up his wives*
*By a thousand more.*

Some of the writers working in this genre have been criticized as more journalists than poets. Uri Avneri, against whom this attack was made, replied, "That's why I can tell the truth in my poems." He is worth reading, both in verse and prose, as a typical instance of the sincere man not gifted with immense creative genius but yet free from the vices that often go with genius. In some respects he and those like him still sustain, with a temperate perseverance, the note of hopefulness which characterized early Zionism and which we have seen Mirski and others amend. His soldier, writing a last letter, says:

*If, my dear, you must have a last message,*
*The sort that can sometimes be turned over in the mind:*
*Try to bring up your children complete men,*
*Beautiful, noble, freer than we have been.*
*Try to act to the best of your power,*
*To build the world that is advancing....*

This lucid trusting note has often been heard before, from the men who fought for the Spanish Republic, for example, and often elsewhere in the 1930's; something fine, a witness of worthy life, but not quite enough to help life; we go on waiting for the real poet, the Lorca, or perhaps the Auden or Alterman, who throws at us not only that sincerity but with it a quiverful of images original and fierce and disconcerting. Some of the specimens in the earlier paragraphs here may have suggested that there are personalities among the new Hebrew poets capable of fulfilling this task.

# SIX POEMS FROM THE HEBREW

## *A Selection of Recent Works*

## ON THE WINGS OF EAGLES

### Y. D. KAMZAN

To watch Zion's flag unfurled
On an embassy mast overseas
The Exiles rallied in thousands,
Survivors of fire and sword,
Remnants of Israel overseas.
So many, they shone like Israel's fields
Bringing to pass
The prophecy of Ezekiel
That hopeless and desperate,
Children and graybeards together,
They should come thronging, driving forward
Like driven sea. . . .

Smiling joy and tears
Their eyes longingly
Lift to the flag, as to
The copper serpent in Sinai.
It is Israel's great day
Shot with the dread and glory
Of the vision of God
By the river Kebar.
Delight in their eyes, their hearts stirring
That a promise is fulfilled
With God's own surety,
The Advent, the End of Evil Days.

The sky is Exile's cloud-deep sky
But the light of the Seven Great Days
Flames on the face of the people.
Transfigured beyond precedent,
Heart and eye answering heart and eye
And the flag of Israel breaking and
Making them people who dream:

And behold, a dray-cart of heavy timber and iron bracings
Yoked to a pair of hinnying, galloping horses,
From whose jaws saliva drips and sparks fly from their hooves.
A tattered mantle, held round his waist with a string,
Wraps the driver, who stands by the seat with red bright face
And cracks his whip over the horses
And storms with the reins and makes them spurt and kick.
And now comes his lusty shout:
"He who said grow to the grass and it grew,
He who said fly to the birds and they flew,
He who said know to my heart and it knew,
He will speak to my horses now and they will know what to do.

My heart is longing for Zion. Thrust out, my eagles.
Pounce on my fathers' land down the track of the seagulls."

Hearing this verse like the subsiding ocean
The crowd fell quiet,
The whole audience hushed
And silently huddled together
Amazed and conjecturing.
And lo, before the gaze of thousands
The dray was swung up over the earth
And the dray-horses soared like eagles.
See, they are climbing across the city,
Their flaming paws almost chip
The tip of the flagstaff of Zion
As they thrash aloft in a great sweep.

And at ebb of day when the skies are on fire
The sentries, strict at the watch, on Haifa's hill
Guarding Elijah's cave, scanning the sea,
Sight horses and dray and a driver flying east
And leap to attention, salute, tremble.
And ringed in the flames of the sunset
The chariot of fire, the horses of fire, burn rose. . . .
The cart dips in its flight and at one bound
Drops to the brook Kishon and comes to rest—

And in that dear light gleams out Kfar Hasidim.

## BEYOND DEATH

### A. YAHEL

Like the elms we are,
Melancholy, branching out,
Blank of expression,
Silent.

Day will not rise again for us—
We have died.
Night will put no fear into us—
We are the substance of fear.
Terrors are our friends
And oblivion the loins about us.

All the storms are finished,
The absolute slumber come.
No yearning. No anger.
Also no menaces.
—Like the elms,
Dour, branching out,
Blank of expression,
Dead.

# PROVERBS OF THE VIRGINS

## PINCHAS SADEH

The birds above drink blood when sunset burns,
And God looks on them, she-birds all.
Then my thoughts, my hopes become tears, tears drenching my song
In which God is manifest
As in the absolute mirror beyond time.

Everything is affliction, everything is song. And know this:
Of all wines brewed tears are the strongest brew.
If you sit over the wine at midnight and your body is
Like a hall for prayer or carousal, and your eyes like the world's luminaries,

Not the wine has dizzied you, but the tears in your blood.
Or if at dusk you lie on your bed and your body is
Like the grave and your lips like rolls of dung,
Not the brain then, but the blood laments in you–

Blood that has turned in your vessels to tears
Because you have meditated on it long.

This is what I think: there is no song without tears. And so
I cannot in any wise praise the sweetness of earth or the beauty of girls.

These marvels are fire-loveliness which ends in a house consumed.
I will not praise anything pleasant, anything sweet and beaming
That, bringing a smile to the lips, leaves immune and unstirred
The lust for the non-existent, the longed-for, hidden higher than
the heights–

What is this lust and our deepest delicate need?
What but the tears of the blood weeping for solace?

What is the purpose of longings? What do they lead to?
They tend to the pure crystallization of tears
When God examines our lust through the glass beyond time.

The birds above drink blood when sunset burns.
They will not range far abroad.
My thoughts and dreams also grow dark at dusk
And all my longings
Intensify into the ultimate dusk.

I will tell you what our lives on earth resemble
Pacing towards the eternal.
They are like ten virgins bidden to the bridal night.
Five, who were wise, decked themselves in mourning,
Five, who were foolish, did nothing to adorn themselves.
Now came the groom and looked, and the foolish ones he reproached
And dismissed them. But to the sad five
He said: I must praise these dear adornments,
The skill of their fashioning, the love that awoke the skill.
Come then, my sisters, come to me, beloved.

I will tell you again what our lives resemble.
They are like ten virgins whose time came
To attend the bridegroom. And five of them,
Five who were wise took jewels betokening grief,
And five who were foolish took trinkets of joy.

Now the bridegroom came, burning and strong like the sun at its zenith,
And the baubles of joy melted to nausea, to nausea melted.
But the jewels of grief were bright like the bright sky,
Pure like the very sky or the heart on fire at love time.

The bridegroom drove out those who were foolish
With bitter reproach. But five who were wise and sad,
He sweetened with favor and gathered them to his lap.

And know, if at dusk you lie on your bed and your body
Is like the grave and your lips like rolls of dung
And you listen to the deeps of the blood crying
And listen to the cry that will not be calmed
—Know you are shaping a jewel for the great king,
For the Lord of Grief who is your groom.

## ETCHING

### SANDO DAVID

CONCHES of sand—the ants' joy.
Like a blue eye Spring opens wide,
Like a glance swift with covert alarm.

A tree watches the sea of heaven.
Longing takes us
To scatter the seeds of stars.
In many colors the night mutters.

## WIND FROM THE SEA

### NATHAN ALTERMAN

THE wind is swooping. China jugs
And copper drum a chorus loud.
Trussed up like a fowl, the trees
Beat their wings upon the ground.

The quarter flickers with its lightning.
Saws are its music's peak.
So it sings. Cordova's lions
Never made it *Songs of Zion*.

The city flickers. From the darkness
Sparks on a ship reply.
The song of Israel was never
Its howling jackal or its lyre.

But see how fond the people are
Of their city! The wind swoops
Across the harbor. Shutters rattle.
The climate is keen and good.

## THE BOOKS

### NATHAN ALTERMAN

Autumn has—its polished brass. The rising wave—its frosty pride.
And the never-to-be-forgotten books
their light that's left unnamed.
I remember the candle burning over battles in the volume
and on the silence of its women, window-framed.

In this very light, this very night, its city was bared to me,
and my city it was in sadnesses, my city in healthless strife.
Heedlessly, my comrades, as if I were crossing a pavement,
I passed into its lives, beyond the bounds of life.

I swear. This can be in libraries, there too one can love unto death.
The life of the scrolls, and their thought—is their mummy-queen.
And on the walls of ruins and graveyards, still fresh with dew,
like the lips of Chamutal, their ancient moss is green.

And when in the land of the living the stormy-combed rooster crows,
his voice reaches the land of the books, to the moons and houses there.
There clamor grows into crystal, precision is pregnant with doom—
there silences hang by a hair.

Yet let but the sign be given, let but the sword be brandished,
and, to the hunt, the hound-pack,
in their chains baying,
flows.
Candles and voices are lifted high, summers and snows do battle,
and prisons and doors unclose—

—Thus the books from their nothingness flame again on our tables,
predestination renewed. Without a page failing,
without skipping a heartbeat, without calling for mercy in woe,
we accept the toilsomeness of the roads, and the infants' wailing.

Primitive is the power of the books. In them, none is idle.
Brothers are they to the masons, to the three sons of God's grace:
to seasons of cold-and-heat, to pride of the wind, and to waters—
to the sculptors of the world's face.

They beat out the terraced flint, raise up its wrathful ranges,
rock the cradled nations to the snoring of its clock.
When night falls on the world their candlelight pierces its shutters,
a ruddy candle that has not slept.

How I have lusted to terrify them, uprooting their confession,
to chase the cunning thoughts
in their circles sent.
Lo, lo the lovely one, appears like a hind from the thicket,
as she was at the moment of Genesis, trembling and intent.

For strong is the wind in the mountains, and none like the corn-ears are pure,
and nothing is as bright as the good dew
in the meadows:
their distances and glories are their heritage from God,
but their soul, my brothers, is taken from books.

And in the name of the wind in the mountains, of my life of sackcloth
and ashes,
of Chamutal, my brothers, and her dewy eyes glancing,
whose mother cares not, whether she be in books or in villages,
who is pure to the one who bore her, whether in parchment or dancing.—

—May God preserve the scrolls, their greatness in desecration,
from dampness and moths and the conqueror's vengeful ire,
may the Lord preserve them from fools and from their folly,
and from a booby's wisdom as from fire.

Now my song is spoken. Perhaps I have said it in vain.
Perhaps its love is foreign. And strange to you its need.
But among your songs, among the nine, I wanted thus to hammer it.
May it go with them as brother to the land that is decreed.

Their faces dark, the brothers said:
You are our brother, our brother indeed.

NATHAN ALTERMAN's "The Books" is translated from the Hebrew by Sholom J. Kahn; his "Wind from the Sea" is translated by Jacob Sloan and Gabriel Preil. Translation of the other poems is by Herbert Howarth.

# PLAINT OF A GENTILE INTELLECTUAL

## *A New "Minority Problem"?*

### CHANDLER BROSSARD

THERE is a new Alienated Man around. He is the Gentile intellectual in New York City. Hopelessly outnumbered by his Jewish colleagues on the New York intellectual scene, of late he has begun to feel that his back is against the wall.

It is tough enough for the Gentile born in New York, who is at least geographically, if not spiritually, acclimated, but it is at least five times that tough for the Gentile intellectual who immigrated here from some distant city. When he begins to acquire friends he finds, after a while, that somehow most of them are Jewish. (Somewhere in the process the few Gentiles were passed over.) Most, not some, of the smartest people he knows are Jews, and he soon begins to believe that the Jewish intellectual is the only intellectual who is really "hip," that is, in the know, and that the Gentile is "square," or naive.

So what does he do? The Gentile simultaneously accepts and rejects. Partly consciously, partly unconsciously, he starts assuming some of the wise style of the Jewish intellectual, to overcome what he thinks is his own naivety, in order to become part of the group surrounding him. The implications of this are almost infinite.

Strange things happen. His vocabulary becomes spiced with Jewish inflections and expressions (his friends teach him the correct pronunciations: he has an increasingly strong tendency to say "*nu?*" instead of "so?"). His gestures become sensual, curvilinear, and an elaborate and necessary part of his communication. His humor becomes less mirthful—so long, Mark Twain!—and more ironic, twisted, oblique, and gaggy. (If he is a writer this gag quality finally gags him insofar as his originality is concerned.) He cannot remember the last time he told a joke that did not involve a Jew or the Jewish point of view. He becomes much talkier than he ever was, and finds—sometimes with a helpless confusion, even distaste—that part of his enjoyment of any experience, often one of extreme privacy, is talking about it, exploiting it verbally. His own tradition was to withhold, to keep things to himself, not to make everything communal.

He feels, in effect, a kind of clown. His confusion is not helped by the fact that for the first time in his life he is now a member of a minority. It almost seems that he is a kind of extravagance of his Jewish circle, like an extra movie over the weekly ration, uptown and complete with vaudeville. He wonders whether he is ever really being accepted; he feels that his Jewish friends do certain things for each other that they do not do for him. Is he at the center or the periphery?

There was a lot of conversation and suddenly he looks up and sees that his friends have gone off to have a pastrami sandwich.

All this makes him re-examine what he thought were his friendships. He discovers that he has been misled by his Jewish

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A "MINORITY" was recently defined, somewhat informally, as someone who feels pushed around. Perhaps some will find this personal statement on behalf of a new, unsuspected minority a piece of oversensitivity. But there is no questioning the author's sincerity, and while our own guess is that the phenomenon he describes is much more limited and less representative than he implies, we must admit to having heard similar stories from other similarly situated members of advanced intellectual circles in and out of New York City. CHANDLER BROSSARD has worked as editor and writer for the Washington *Post, Time,* the *New Yorker, Coronet,* and has published short stories in *Story, Tomorrow,* and other periodicals. He was born in Idaho in 1922, and he resides in New York.

friends' social ease. It was so painless for him to establish what he thought was real rapport: the Jews were so immediately warm and gracious and understanding, so *intime,* that he felt after a short while as if he had known them for years. He felt this way partly because it actually did take almost years sometimes to reach this same degree of relaxedness and confidence with another Gentile. And when it was reached with a Gentile, after a long and bruising feeling-out period, they had developed in the process a real friendship, and were committed to each other. So he experiences considerable shock when his Jewish friends, whom he mistakenly thinks have been with him through almost everything, suddenly treat him with the casualness of an acquaintance. But it is his own fault, he soon realizes: his friends had never signed a blood pact with him, he just thought they had.

It is only after a long groping period that he begins to understand his Jewish intellectual friends in New York. Particularly those in Greenwich Village.

Never before, for instance, has he seen so much concern with an individual style, so much intensive self-conscious development of a "personality."

He sees the young Jewish poet who wants to seem like an underworld character, talking and thinking out of the corner of his mouth, his every public move calculated to encourage this personality myth. While the other person in this cultivated schizophrenia is the soft, boy-faced poet protectedly experiencing his baroque emotional reactions to life unseen by the gullible public. And he looks on with suspended judgment as this poet shows him the way to turn an image into a gimmick.

He watches the under-thirty Jewish writer of Kafkaesque fiction who seems to have trouble choosing between the role of an American cowboy with blue denim pants and checked shirt, slouch-walking as best he can, prairie-swept, or on the other hand the avuncular academician from Minsk, with accents and gestures and style so rich and convincing you will almost swear he offered you a sip from that steaming glass of tea you are sure he was holding. And our friend the *goy,* remembering one story that sounded like a translation from the German, reads something else by this man that extends the confusion even further because it sounds like Ring Lardner.

Another of his friends wants to be known as an athlete, and is constantly proposing a boxing match at the gym, or a swimming race under water, or a run around the mile track, or a tennis match on an equatorial day. Actually he is quite frail, and is shy about being a painter.

The Gentile at first takes all this seriously. It is—or was—his habit to play it straight, to maintain a personality and behavior consonant with what he believes to be his real or true self. He then gets the feeling that his Jewish friends are smiling at him because he is so straight. What happens? He often winds up playing straight man to his friends at a nearly all-Jewish party. All those true words said in jest. . . .

After a while he stumbles into certain back corners of the lives of his Jewish friends.

He visits Coney Island. Here he sees the blurred shifting faces of his Jewish friends as they grew up. The whole place is one vast objective correlative—the Castles in the sand, the continually moving juxtaposition of youth and age and group sexual pursuit and sightseeing and shrieking on the boardwalk, the shooting galleries where the dead ducks flip alive at the next turn, the three-for-a-quarter reproductions of posed absurdity, the hot dogs with sauerkraut and onions and India relish, the sudden strength that rings a bell on a tall pole, the giant laughing woman being endlessly tickled by a machine.

He comes away wiser than he was, linking a gesture on the boardwalk to a line in a lyric, a certain quick scene to a gibe he had heard two weeks ago at a party, a barker's spiel to a book reviewer's technique. He taps his pocket to see if his passport is still there.

Then he visits a home in Brooklyn. The front living room with the brand-new-looking furniture (the caul still protecting the lampshade) stiffly arranged as if waiting for the principal speaker of the evening. The strong, loving, almost masculine mother who still hovers around her son even though he is now in his late twenties. (Where was that caul? Over the lampshade?) He senses with increasing uneasiness that the Jewish mother would like to stroke him too as he sits there. He listens to his friend's continual reminiscences about his childhood and his schooldays. His finest years. And the combination of *Bubbe* and cookies turns up with the regularity of a creditor. He, the *goy,* feels the compulsion to keep these objects and areas in his already finished past. Perhaps because they were so depressing, so full of unexpressed rage and unlove.

Now, perhaps, he understands the situation somewhat better. He sees the Jewish intellectual in New York as a person actually very different from himself, in cultural tradition almost opposed, and then, perhaps for the first time, he discovers *himself* for what he is traditionally. (His circle of intellectual friends has indirectly told him he is actually the bourgeois, playing around intellectualism "for kicks"—though they say this with envy.) He has the choice now of recognizing his background and origins, his differences, and living accordingly, or of denying them and reshaping himself with the help, or proximity, of his Jewish friends. The temptation to submit to reshaping is strong; it is hard to be different in these surroundings.

But if the Gentile submits, then his ambivalence becomes acute, and he thinks his helpmates are patronizingly corrupting him, and where once he may have considered himself, jokingly, as the All-American Goy, he now thinks of himself as the Inauthentic Goy. But even this new alienation of his seems a Jewish literary brand of alienation, not his own raw brand.

If, on the other hand, he rejects the influences around him, his reaction is often stronger than is necessary, his behavior more separate, and he hears his friends remark that something is wrong with him lately, he is acting so strange. Those Gentile neurotics, they're so wild. He wonders if he even knows how to be properly neurotic. (Once he dreamed he had been turned into a goat and was about to be dispatched into the wilderness by his Jewish friends.)

What can he do? He does not intend to leave New York. (Everybody knows you can't go back home.) Paris? Who wants to go to Paris? He cannot afford, yet, to be psychoanalyzed. His friends kid him about the possibility of changing his name. One of them even suggested that maybe the American Jewish Committee would eventually set up a fund for the investigation of his dilemma. Meanwhile, here he is at COMMENTARY.

# A MESSY LEAVE

## *A Story*

### AMOS MOSSENSON

WELL, there I was sitting in the barred cell in a mood as messy as the clothes I was wearing. The sight of the iron bars gave me the feeling of Inquisition torture chambers. From the deeps of memory those bars brought up the horrible forceps that dentists use, which in turn reminded me of what I could not help feeling already. Namely and to wit, that I was as hungry as a jackal.

But at length the door opened and in wandered a police officer, still three-quarters asleep, with the ends of his pajama trousers sticking out from under his coat.

"What's your name?" he asked in an annoyed tone.

"Iwhistled," I answered in helpless indifference.

"What's your name?" he repeated, as though he had not heard.

"Iwhistled."

"What's your name? What do they call you?"

And he amplified his question with his gestures.

"They call me Iwhistled," I yelled into his ear. "When I was a little chap I couldn't whistle, and once I ran in on the gang shouting: 'Boys, I whistled'; and ever since then they call me Iwhistled."

"Where do you live?" and he took out his notebook.

"In the Negev."

"What street?" he went on.

"Listen, Comrade," I made a last desperate effort, "I am a member of a Negev kibbutz. I have a week's leave and it's over tomorrow. If you try to hold me up here you'll have to deal with our Secretaryess. And I'm not responsible for what she may do."

"Sit quiet!" said the officer between his teeth, and for greater security opened the door leading to the police room. Then he went on:

"What's your business down there in the Negev?"

"I put a brake on the wind."

A burst of laughter nearly knocked me over. All the policemen in the station were milling round the door of the cell, listening in.

"I told you he's tra-la-la," said the ginger fellow.

"Puts a brake on the wind! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"If we hadn't caught him he'd have messed the whole town up with tar."

The officer went on questioning me, and I began sweating. But all of a sudden he was called away. A gang of thieves had been caught. They had broken into an apartment, put the owners to sleep with some sleeping powder or something, and then, instead of being careful, they had fallen asleep themselves.

SO THERE I was, left alone with all my sad thoughts. The long-awaited leave had finally arrived. More than half a year had passed since my last one. Then we had marched through the streets of the town, proud and dirty, sporting beards and mops of hair, and proudly displaying our camel-insignia on our necks and chests. Mothers

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AMOS MOSSENSON, one of the more promising of the younger Israeli writers, was born in 1927 at Ein Ganim, an agricultural cooperative near Petach Tikva. He served in the shock-troop organization, Palmach, during the period of resistance against British rule and the later struggle with the Arabs, and he is now a member of a kibbutz in the Negev. Mr. Mossenson has published short stories in numerous Israeli periodicals. "A Messy Leave" appeared in Hebrew in *Al Hamishmar* in December 1949, and later, in an English translation by I. M. Lask, in the magazine *Israel* (Tel Aviv); it is Mr. Lask's translation that is given here.

pointed us out, telling their little ones: "They're from the Negev." The girls strewed compliments on the bushy beards, thinking not of the beards but of what was behind them. And the little scamps ran behind us yelling: "Go to the zoo, go to the zoo."

In those days the Negev was a firm of repute in the country. The Negev was the war objective. It was the future, the anvil for the hammer of the nation. (I pinched this metaphor from my uncle, who's a blacksmith.) On all sides the songs were promising us, "We shall build you, build you up, thirsty, thirsty Negev." On every wall and billboard, letters that looked just like clenched fists banged and boomed: "YOUNG MAN, YOUNG WOMAN, THE NEGEV IS WAITING FOR YOU."

But half a year had passed since then. Only a few of us were left. We were trying to plant trees. We were trying to put a brake on the wind. (And why should that make them laugh?) We were trying to dig wells. And a few months had passed that way, and now the time for my leave had come round, the leave I had been waiting for so long. At last I would see my old friends, who presumably would not let me go but would get all the tales of the far-famed Negev out of me, with all its prospects, absorption capacity, and so on. They would certainly want to know how we live. At the Saturday evening gatherings in the Pinati Café there was bound to be somebody who would say reminiscently, "Have you heard, gang, our Iwhistled has become an important fellow. He belongs to a kibbutz in the Negev." And maybe some inquisitive journalist would get hold of me for the real dope about water in the Negev and so on.

No sooner had I left the bus after five hours of bone-shaking, than the city received me with a tremendous advertisement in twelve colors, reading: "YOUNG MEN, YOUNG WOMEN, JOIN THE POST OFFICE. SALARY PROSPECTS AND HIGH GRADING."

Without understanding what it was all about I strode through the streets, bemused by the noise of the cars and the crowds, feeling as though I were going through some wadi with steep walls and could hear a sudden spate of water coursing down behind me.

All of a sudden I bumped into my old friend David, marching along importantly with a portfolio in his hand.

"Shalom, David!" I thundered at him.

"Shalom and how may you be," he answered me easily, as though I had come to ask a loan of him. He inspected me from head to foot.

"Where do you work?" he asked me.

"In the Negev," I proudly responded.

"In which department and which ministry?" he made his question more specific.

"What ministry!" I felt insulted. "I belong to a kibbutz in the Negev."

"Oh, like that is it. Well then, shalom to you again." And he turned and went his way.

For six full minutes I stood stock-still, gazing at the spot on the corner where David had vanished from view. When the seventh minute began I sighed, a deep deep sigh, and took my way to my parents' home. Next day I began a series of visits to my relations and acquaintances. My eyes were already accustomed to the change in the atmosphere, so here and there I saw all kinds of advertisements in queer styles. On one billboard I read a proclamation: "HALUTZ YOUTH: FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE, THE BEST FORCES OF THE HALUTZ YOUTH ARE REQUIRED FOR THE LEGAL PROFESSION. HALUTZ YOUTH—JOIN THE SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND LAW."

Then there was a fragment from some party statement: "HALUTZ YOUTH IS CALLED UPON TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING THE STATE, AND SHOULD PIONEER IN THE CIVIL SERVICE."

Or a proclamation in a slightly different style: "LISTEN YOUTH! YOU WHO CONQUERED THE DRY LAND, VOLUNTEER NOW FOR THE MERCHANT MARINE. GOOD PROSPECTS OF RISING IN RANK."

I dropped in to pay a visit to my former teacher at the high school. I was very fond of him. He always left me with the impression that he knew what you were up to behind his back. After the second glass of tea we began reminiscing about his numerous pupils who had been my classmates. I asked and he answered.

"Where's Shmulik?"

"Shmulik's an air pilot."

"Where's Shimon?"

"Gone abroad to study."

"Where's Joshua?"

"Working in the Kirya."

And so all down the line. But finally the teacher sighed: "Ah well, Iwhistled, you were a gifted pupil. I hoped that something would come out of you, and you've been and gone and vanished in the Negev. It's a pity, a real pity."

I went along to pay a visit to Gila, a relation of mine, a practical sort of girl who looks well ahead. When she was twelve years old she decided that I would be just about the right shape of husband for her when the time came, and for the past six years she had been trying to persuade me to be a fatalist and give in to things as they are. I was fed up with the halutzim spouting from all the advertisement billboards, offices, and cafés, which made me feel that I was crawling in the very dust! So I would have been quite liable to turn to Gila and surrender unconditionally, telling her: "Gila, remember what you told me when we said goodbye half a year ago?"

As soon as I came in she fell on my neck with fancy cake and nuts and chocolate, all wrapped up in smiles.

"What are you doing, Iwhistled? Where have you vanished to?"

"Me, I'm not in town," I decided to be careful.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm not an airman," I answered.

"What a pity!" she sighed. "Where d'you work?"

"I'm not a government official at the Kirya," I went on preparing her for the worst.

"How much are you getting a month?" she was still gunning for me.

"I haven't a car of my own," I dodged the issue in my turn.

But there's no dodging Gila. She took me by my shirt button and gave me a look.

"How much do you get?"

I began laughing in sheer despair.

"Three pounds is what I get."

"Three pounds a day! Why, that's wonderful!"

And she began totting up on her fingers.

"Not a day," I went on laughing. "Three pounds a week."

"A week?" she said in astonishment. "How's it possible?"

"Yes," I began explaining, "three pounds a week and leave once in half a year." And I went on, in sheer relief at being able to get it off my chest. "I'm a member of a kibbutz in the Negev. What do you think of it?"

She didn't trouble to answer, but called into the other room: "Mother, put the white dress back in the closet. I'm not going out this evening, I have a headache."

And so I reached this cursed night. I wandered round the streets of the town all by myself, after fleeing from my mother's heartfelt persuasiveness: "You can be in a kibbutz, but why does it have to be the Negev?"

The leave passed and it was about time for me to return to my distant hill with its seedlings and rows of trees, planted as windbreaks. And all my comrades and acquaintances here would promptly forget me because they were so busy with important matters, and the whole town would go on with all its noise and rush, and nobody would remember the youngsters obstinately setting out each plant and seedling in those distant and desolate wastes. Yet we were the offshoots of this very town, and we were the ones who ensured its calm and security. I strolled about through the empty streets. It was after midnight already and I thought about my leave, which had vanished like smoke. I remembered how they received us with jubilation; and how the Negev had yelled and screeched from every wall. And I came to the conclusion that something had changed during those months. There were new songs in the air, and the old battle cries had been forgotten.

All of a sudden my gloomy thoughts struck against a black object. This was a pot of tar for mending the roads. I compared the pot to my own mood, and regretfully decided that both of them were equally black. Then suddenly I had an idea. I remembered how when I had been an urchin in the Youth Units we used to go out at midnight with tins of paste and cover the whole city with posters and proclamations. And I promptly became enthusiastic. Something like a sandstorm began raging through my chest. I must give vent, I decided, to the cry of my desolation. Feverishly I put pieces of wood under the pot, and set them alight. Then I dashed home, furtively put on working clothes, took my bicycle and set off. The pitch was bubbling and boiling in the pot. I took a big brush, dipped it in the tar, and began scrawling huge letters: "YOUNGSTERS, THE NEGEV IS STILL EMPTY!"

My workmanship pleased me, just as though I were a modern painter that nobody can understand but himself. I went on enthusiastically.

On the plate-glass window of a pharmacy I scrawled: "THE ONLY REMEDY IS NEGEV SETTLEMENT."

I splashed myself all over with tar: I was head over heels in my labors. From house to house I sped on my bike with the tar and the brush. And with great satisfaction I felt that I was capable of messing up the whole town in the course of a single night.

Finally I reached the Knesset building. I dipped my brush in the pot and wrote: "KNESSET MEMBERS, WHERE ARE YOUR SONS?"

"Don't worry, we're here!" I heard a voice behind me. And two policemen grabbed me round the middle.

"What are you up to? Where are you from?"

"Hands off!" I told them. "I'm from the Negev."

"From the Negev?" One of the policemen became alarmed. "Must be an infiltrator." He stuck a whistle in his mouth and blew for all he was worth. Some more policemen promptly came dashing up.

"What's happened, what's going on?"

"We've caught an infiltrator," said the policeman excitedly.

"Infiltrator my foot," said the other angrily. "It's simply a lunatic. He's messed up the whole street with all kinds of old slogans about the Negev."

"Must have read too many out-of-date newspapers and got mixed up," remarked the third.

"What? Slogans?" a fourth broke in. "Slogans again? How much did you get for it? More incitement? Foreign influences! Undermining! Defamation!"

By this time all the policemen were wildly excited, and were shouting weird words in confusion. I lifted up my brush and yelled, the way our Secretaryess yells at meetings:

"Silence, Comrades!"

It had a wonderful effect. They shut up at once, murmuring:

"Silence! But real silence. Operation Silence!"

"Comrades!" I used the opportunity and began to speechify. "The expanses of the Negev are desolate and uninhabited. Without a wall of settlements there can be no security on the frontiers! Comrades! Comrades! Where is the halutz youth?"

"What do you mean where?" one of the policemen interrupted me. "The halutz youth is in the police." And one of them produced a tired-looking newspaper and turned his torch on the lines of print: "THE POLICE SUMMON THE BEST OF HALUTZ YOUTH TO JOIN ITS RANKS AT REVISED WAGES."

HERE it seems my nerves must have given out. I found myself sitting in the prisoners' cell.

While I was still deep in my thoughts, the officer came in cheerfully. I suppose he was counting on a rise in rank for catching the thieves who had fallen asleep in somebody else's apartment.

"Listen, my lad," said he to me, "we'll forget the whole business. Luckily for you

I can understand your mood. Once upon a time I was a member of a kibbutz as well, but times change, you understand. I'm looking for satisfaction, and in the police I get a kick out of it every time we catch a thief."

"So you're letting me go?"

"Yes." And he called back into the policemen's room:

"Give a general alarm, fetch in all the policemen, take tins of benzine and clean up all those messy inscriptions! We must clean up the town by morning!"

Then he turned a stern eye on me.

"To have to call all the police out for the sake of one rascal! If you had only come into my hands. . . ."

"You should be ashamed of yourself, you parasite." I gave him what for at the top of my voice. "What are you doing here? Why aren't you in the Negev?"

"Why, what's happening? Have they opened a police station there?" he asked with genuine interest.

That did for me.

"Well then, depart in peace," said the officer, "and remember the times in which you live."

"Messy times," said I. "Don't you dare clean up the slogans. These tranquil citizens must be reminded of the real situation."

"I'm sorry, but it makes the walls dirty."

"I'll publish it in the newspapers," I all but burst out weeping, "and let everybody know what young folk are being trained for in the State of Israel."

"We'll deny it, and they won't believe you," said the officer.

"They'll believe me, you'll see! I'll yell with all my force."

"Of course you will, but nobody will hear you. After all, you'll be in the Negev, and that's so far away. . . ."

# FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

## PRIVATE ENTERPRISE IN THE BRONX

### *Rags to Riches on Washington Avenue*

### MILTON KAPLAN

WESTWARD from Crotona Park, the Bronx drops so precipitously that a sled, unimpeded, can start at Fulton Avenue and hurtle past Bathgate, Washington, Park, and finally come to rest at the bottom of the valley on Webster Avenue. Of course no sled ever did it, in my day. There were the car tracks and the Elevated at Third Avenue; the New York Central ran through the steep canyon dug out of Park Avenue, and there were car tracks again on Webster. Besides, the ashes that the worried businessmen cast into the drifts after each snow storm made the descent impossible. Standing on the crest of the hill at Fulton Avenue, we eyed the prospect that sloped so tantalizingly towards the west, and then turned and prudently trudged on to Crotona Park to breast its safe and gentle hills.

When I was a boy, I lived in that valley, on Washington Avenue. Even in 1920 it was fast becoming a slum. The tenement houses were old and crowded. We had a coal stove in the kitchen, and I remember going down to our cubicle in the cellar and bringing up a pail of coal for the fire. We still had gaslight for illumination. Steam and electricity finally did come to our house, but not quickly enough to hold the more affluent tenants. They had moved out. The trend was ever west. From Prospect Avenue in the East Bronx, at one time quite fashionable, they moved to Fulton Avenue, then jumped to the Grand Concourse, and finally nestled against the Hudson River at Riverside Drive. That was as far west as they could go. After that there was nothing left but Long Island or Westchester.

We stayed behind. Poor families didn't move, unless they were evicted, and somehow we kept a desperate grip on our four dark rooms. The darkness didn't bother us much; we spent most of our time outdoors. The boys played baseball (outdoor baseball with a hard ball; there was no nonsense about soft-ball baseball in those days) in Crotona Park, and punchball right in the gutter outside the house. Manhole covers served as home plate and second base. First and third bases were chalked in. Our game was interrupted only occasionally by automobiles. They still weren't very numerous in our neighborhood. A great feat of prowess in those days was to punch a rubber ball two "sewers"; that is, to hit the ball two manhole covers away. The game of punchball that brought ball and fist into direct and savage contact has disappeared from the streets of New York. I wonder why. Today, the boys wield a broomstick in the gutter game of stickball, a vastly inferior sport.

For extra diversion there were the back yards, where the cats prowled night and

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**Milton Kaplan** has published poetry and criticism in a large number of magazines, including the *New Republic, Tomorrow, Partisan Review,* and **Commentary**. His book *Radio and Poetry* was published by Columbia University Press in 1949. He was born in New York City in 1910 and studied at the College of the City of New York and Columbia University.

day, the lots on the east side of Park Avenue, the freight yards on the other side of Park Avenue, and for the adventurous, the Jerome Woods, today known, I suppose, as Jerome Avenue. We made fires in the lots and roasted "mickies," potatoes that we had stolen from home. We dared each other to jump from the roofs of the stationary freight trains. Once we ventured into a freight car to explore its contents. A railroad detective was waiting for us as we emerged with packs of gaudy labels intended for U-No-Us Bruckner carbonated beverages. We scattered and ran, holding on to our orange-colored loot. I vaulted a fence and ran all the way home, terrified.

I'D LIKE to think I led a wild and dissolute boyhood in the good old American tradition, but I'm afraid it was pretty tame. Of course, we dangled from the pedestrian bridge over the New York Central tracks, and even climbed down occasionally and flattened against the wall as the train streaked wildly by, but I can't remember anyone's ever being hurt. We had our block fights, too, 174th Street against 173rd Street, but even that degenerated into an innocuous melee with all of us surrendering our block loyalty to the private pleasure of flinging paper bags filled with sand at anyone who came into range. Once, someone threw a milk bottle, but it went wide of the mark, perhaps intentionally, and that scared us all and broke up that particular fight, and we all went home feeling exhilaratingly wicked.

We didn't have many playthings. We had roller skates—"Ball-Barions," we called them (the kids still do, I've discovered)—and we raced in the gutters despite our mothers' passionate warnings, and we hitched on the backs of wagons and cars. Someone had a bat. I don't know where he got it; I know he didn't buy it. We didn't buy baseball bats. I had a catcher's mitt, a black one that I got in exchange for two hundred (I think) United Cigar coupons that I had saved up (my father smoked). Naturally I became the catcher of our baseball team, and I broke every finger in my right hand learning how. I caught without a mask, chest protector, or shin guards. I just squatted behind the batter and caught, the United Cigar mitt between me and the lopsided, black-taped ball we had to use and re-use. The outfield played barehanded. Sometimes the first baseman was the only other player on the field with a glove. The scores in those games used to run up into the twenties and thirties. Still, Hank Greenberg rose out of our neighborhood.

Nobody had a bicycle, although we did have homemade wagons, constructed from a box, a shaft, and four wheels wrenched from an abandoned baby carriage. Sometimes boys in a frenzy of impatience did not wait for the carriage to be abandoned. We made adequate scooters out of two shafts of wood nailed together perpendicularly and roller skates that had at last outlived their usefulness.

This isn't meant to sound pathetic. We didn't feel pathetic in the least. We accepted poverty as we did the weather. It simply was inexorable and inescapable and we lived our lives accordingly. We never dreamed of buying a bike, although sometimes we chipped in and rented one for an hour, and all of us took turns riding. (We never had to learn, it seems; we just got on and pedaled away.) We never asked our parents for money except for a nickel for an ice cream sandwich. The ice cream sandwich marked the climax of the day. The candy-store man would slip a thin wafer into a rectangular metal holder, wedge an incredibly thick lump of ice cream into it, and then top it with another wafer. In these effete times children eat ice cream cones and chocolate pops. We didn't have the pops; we did have cones, but scorned them. We all ate ice cream sandwiches—it was a community exercise. Together we went in and bought them and then sat on the curbstone and ran our tongues around the perimeter and then tentatively sank our teeth in and nibbled one corner.

Of course in slack time we didn't have ice cream. Because of the vicissitudes of the garment industry, our year was divided into a slack and a busy season. In the busy season, my father just got along; in slack, work petered out.

MY MOTHER did what she could to protect the children from the full impact of our poverty, but we felt it. It reached us in our beds in the low rumble of the nightly discussion. My mother wanted my father to earn more money. My father insisted he was doing his best. "I can't help it," he cried. "There is no work."

My mother, thinking of us, would keep on talking. Finally my father spread his arms open in a gesture we learned to recognize. "What do you want me to do?" he wailed. "Break a bank?"

Once in a frantic effort to still my mother's entreaties, he did break a bank. He left the house one morning intent on finding work. He came home that evening grim and uncommunicative. We all knew that he had failed. But when my mother drew in her breath to begin the same old tirade, he quietly spilled a heap of dimes into her hand. He didn't bother to explain how he had earned them. Long afterwards he told me he had broken open my dime bank, which in the course of years munificent relatives had managed to fill to capacity. I think I had five dollars in it. My father lived in constant terror of my mother's finding out, and from the very first wages he got after that, he refilled my bank. I was never the wiser. I had tucked it away in some drawer or other. It was my money, I suppose, but I knew I couldn't spend it.

Clothes were patched and mended, and a new suit had to be planned for months in advance. We bought tables and chairs only on the installment plan. There were things I wanted but I knew better than to ask my parents for money. I wanted books. The public library, it was true, lent books, but I wanted my own. Besides, the library didn't keep Frank Merriwell and Tom Swift. Tom Swifts were sold in the combination stationery and book store on Tremont Avenue for the impossible sum of seventy-five cents, but I could get them secondhand from the fellows on the block for twenty cents or so. They also got their copies secondhand. I never knew anyone on the block who ever bought a book firsthand.

Later, when the radio first reached into our consciousness, I longed to build my own crystal set in a cigar-box chassis, but I needed money for the parts, especially the ear phones. I cast around for means of earning money. The traditional methods of mowing lawns and running errands were out. The asphalt was our lawn and the housewives were too thrifty to pay for running their errands. They ran their own, or sent their children.

FORTUNATELY, however, our neighborhood was bare of private telephones. After a while, it is true, telephones became quite common, but at that time I don't remember anyone's having one. One went down to the corner drugstore and used the public telephone. If anyone wanted to reach one of us quickly, he had to call the same drugstore, and the druggist somewhat disgruntled (he was interrupted frequently) would dispatch one of the boys hanging around the corner to get the "party."

That's where I came in. But my scene of operation was not the drugstore—that territory had already been taken. I hung around the candy store on Bathgate Avenue and 173rd Street that sold the jumbo ice cream sandwiches. Bathgate Avenue on that block was still a pleasant tree-lined street, and the pushcarts had not yet invaded its residential privacy.

While waiting for the telephone to ring, I played boxball with the other fellows engaged in the same business. Using the lines of the sidewalk boxes as boundaries, we slapped the ball back and forth, "slicing" and "cutting" until we became miraculously adept at the game. But the shrill summons of the telephone always stopped us, even in the midst of an exciting volley.

We took turns answering the telephone. The first time I took a call, I was terribly excited. I was so nervous that I couldn't even hear what the man at the opposite end of the line was saying, and I had to make him repeat the name and address. Finally I got it and, overwhelmed with gratitude, I blurted "Thank you!" into the receiver and darted out of the store. I've forgotten the name of the "party," but to this day I remember the address. It was 1685 Bathgate Avenue and the lady I called lived on the second floor. She gave me a two-cent tip. It was the first money I had ever earned.

I GOT to be quite skilled at it. I would get the person wanted on the phone and resume my boxball game, keeping one eye on the booth, which I could see through the window of the store. As soon as my client emerged, I stopped playing, but I was never guilty of anything so gauche as advancing towards him or stretching out my hand. I waited with what I hope was studied nonchalance, but I must confess that as experienced as I became, I couldn't stop my heart from pounding. Usually the "party" knew the amenities and would slip me a coin or two, and the transaction would be over. Satisfying the professional curiosity of my colleagues as to the size of the tip, I would then turn back to the game.

I soon learned to gauge my clients. Men were more generous than women. Joyous news made people prodigal. A blossoming romance became a regular source of income since I would be kept busy calling the young lady to the phone. As the affair ripened, I would have to summon the girl even more often, sometimes several times a day. Naturally the size of the tip diminished in somewhat direct proportion to the frequency of the calls. But I did not complain, for I recognized the advantages of security and a regular income.

The best days for business were Saturday and Sunday. During the week the period between seven and eight-thirty in the evening was a critical one, and I managed to get there in time for the really "fat" calls. A girl bright-eyed and radiant meant a nickel tip, which was tops.

People behaved differently when they got bad news. Some passed me by blindly; others sought me out and pressed a large tip into my hand. Businessman though I was, I felt vaguely guilty at taking it; I had been instrumental in bringing the tears into their eyes. I even attempted a few times to give the tip back but they never took it. Once a girl whose engagement had been broken by phone—I overheard her responses—came out crying bitterly and ran all the way home. The next day she found me and stuffed a quarter into my unwilling fist. I stared at it incredulously and I think I told her it was too much, but I'm not sure. The fellows talked about it for weeks afterward, and it tarnished forever the luster of the nickel tip. The girl married someone else soon after and moved away.

Strange as it may seem, I didn't tell my mother about earning the money. She wouldn't have approved of my working; she would have insisted on my going into the park and playing. So I couldn't buy my ear phones—there would have been too many embarrassing questions. But I found that I could use the money to buy books. I always had books around and a few more aroused no suspicion. I think I managed to fill in a set of the Bronco Boys and another set of the Motor Boys. Boys don't read books like those any more.

PART of my money, however, went into the working capital of a new business venture. In the summertime, the same candy store did a land-office business with a staff of private entrepreneurs. I became one of these.

I'm working this out backwards because I'm not sure of the details. This is how I think it went. I got a case of soda, twenty-four bottles in all, for which I paid $1.20, five cents a bottle. In addition, I paid a one-dollar deposit to assure safe return of bottles and case. I received gratis a load of ice, a bottle opener, and a fistful of straws which I stuck into my shirt pocket. The soda was put into my crude wagon, the ice tucked in between the bottles, and my younger brother and I made for Crotona Park. This was strictly a summer trade, and, for that matter, good only on Sunday. In those days people worked a full day on Saturday.

We first went to the ball park near Fulton Avenue where the semi-pro team, the Asburys—later the Everlasts—played their weekly game. It was there that one Sunday, to my horror, I saw the star pitcher of Morris High School pitching for the Asburys, a professional team! Evidently I was the only one who noticed, for he finished his amateur athletic career in a blaze of glory. He was the first pitcher I had ever seen who could pitch a drop. After that game I changed my style and concentrated on my outcurve.

From the ball field we slowly made our way towards Indian Lake. Business at first was pretty slow because we had to charge ten cents a soda and we had to wait for the return of the bottle. A broken bottle meant a deduction of three cents from our profit. If it was a sunny day, the young men were out with their girls, rowing, strolling, or sitting on the benches around the lake. Then it was easy to get rid of our bottles; the sports thought nothing of a twenty-cent romantic gesture. We had to wait for the girls, though, because they sipped their orange pop daintily through straws. The young bucks just tossed it off.

We had to get rid of our stock within an hour or so; otherwise the ice melted and our soda turned warm and unpalatable. Often in the glare of the hot sun we looked longingly at our wares, but we held back and compromised by sucking on a chunk of our ice. After all, drinking our own soda meant not only a loss of the five cents we had paid for it, but also the five-cent profit we could get for it, a total loss of ten cents! On very hot days we could get rid of a case in less than an hour and go back for another one, but usually we had to be content with a day's profit of $1.20. The sum was so respectable that I felt justified in bringing it home to my mother. She kept the dollar and gave us twenty cents.

As I grew older I found out that the money earned was not commensurate with the time and effort. In my summer vacation from high school, I decided to get a regular job. Some genteel pride in my mother made her protest, but I soon overrode her objections. We needed the money.

I was fourteen at the time, too young for a full-time job, but I managed to get a *Bronx Home News* route, for which I paid five dollars a week. For this I got a supply of the *Bronx Home News* (now *Post-Home News*) and a notebook containing the names and addresses of my customers. The area I covered stretched from Webster to Fulton, five square blocks of crowded tenements. Each customer paid twelve cents a week, and I figured I could clear a net profit of about eight dollars.

The job seemed easy enough. On every day except Sunday I got the papers early in the afternoon and was through about five o'clock. At first it was slow going, but I soon mastered the technique. I learned, for instance, that any key could open the occasionally locked door of an apartment house, and I gained entrance without having to ring the bell. I find that information useful even today. I left my wagon with the papers downstairs and took up only the required number of copies. There were no elevators and even a few extra papers got heavy after a climb of five flights of stairs. The superintendent always got a free copy because his good will was indispensable. Delivering to superintendents was a hazardous undertaking. They all lived in the darkness of the basement and kept dogs, presumably for protection against prowling marauders like me. There was one dog in particular, a Great Dane or something, who always bounded out of the depths of Third Avenue to fix me paralyzed against the basement wall. I would have to hold out the free copy of the *Bronx Home News* as identification, and with an ingratiating smile I would advance slowly, while he growled menacingly. I would slip the paper into the door and then back out carefully, still smiling and fighting the impulse to run.

Meanwhile my baseball activities continued apace. I still had my catcher's mitt, many times repaired, and I was the only catcher the team had. Accordingly, the team planned its schedule to suit mine. We played our games in the morning and I delivered in the afternoon. That summer, however, we joined the *Sunday World* Baseball Tournament and that meant that our team, the Cyclones, one day found itself with an important game that had to be played in the afternoon. After a hurried consultation, the entire team threw itself into the concerted effort of delivering papers for me. I drew up a list of customers for each member of the team, and in less than an hour all the papers were distributed and I was free to catch for the team. We lost, and as a result our team was eliminated from the tournament. Moreover, that Saturday, when I made my collections, I had to accept a reduction from virtually every customer who had not had the benefit of my personal service. Most of my teammates had just thrown the papers anywhere, and those who paid some heed to the list I had given them had not bothered to fold the papers and insert them between the knob and the doorjamb in the proper way.

Maybe it was because of that, or because we lost the game (I had thought we had a pretty good chance for the championship), or perhaps because collections weren't going so well—I was netting only about five dollars a week—anyway, for some reason or other, I lost interest in the *Bronx Home News* and carried my route just long enough until a replacement could be found.

Besides, I was going back to high school. I was scheduled to take Latin and I knew I was meant for finer things.

# CEDARS OF LEBANON

## THE DECAY OF THE GENERATIONS

### *Selections from the Sefer Ha-Aggada*

This is the fourth of a series of translations from the Bialik-Ravnitzky *Sefer Ha-Aggada.* Previous selections ("Men and Women," "The Creation," and "Adam and Eve and the Serpent") appeared in the issues of July 1949 and January and March 1950.

The Aggada is made up of stories, dialogues, homilies, sayings, proverbs, fables, and riddles scattered through the Mishna and the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, as well as other sources. The Bialik-Ravnitzky edition of the Aggada, which appeared in six volumes from 1908 onwards, and from which this translation was made, was the fruit of research by the famous Hebrew poet and his scholarly patron into the numerous traditional collections of Aggadic sayings. It was created with the needs of the modern Hebrew-reading and Hebrew-speaking generation in mind and intended as a popular, literary folk-collection rather than an archeological or scholarly monument. It has become one of the most popular modern Hebrew books. The translation into English is by Hilda Auerbach.—Ed.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother (Gen. 4:8).

Cain said to Abel: Come now, let us divide up the world. Said Abel: Good. Said Cain: You take all the movables and I will take all the lands. Thus they made an agreement between them according to which neither of them could have any complaints against the other.

Abel began to herd sheep. Said Cain to him: The land on which you stand belongs to me. Said Abel to him: The wool that you are wearing belongs to me. The one said: Go fly! The other said: Take it off! As a result: "Cain rose up against Abel his brother" (Gen. 4:8).

Cain began to run after him from hill to valley and from valley to hill until they closed with each other and Abel overcame him and Cain was lying beneath him. When Cain saw this he began to scream: Abel my brother! Both of us are in the world—and what are you going to tell father? . . . Whereupon Abel was filled with compassion for him and let him be. Thereupon Cain immediately rose up against him and slew him. Hence it is said: "Cain rose up against Abel his brother." This teaches that one was held down below the other. And how did he kill him? He took a stone and made wound after wound, cut after cut, on his arms and on his legs, for he did not know from what place the soul would depart, until he came to his throat and then Abel died.

Once he had killed him he said [to himself]: I shall flee from my father and my mother, for they cannot seek him except through me, there is no one else in the world but myself and him. Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, was revealed to him.

Said He to him: You may flee from your parents, but from my face you cannot flee. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?" (Jer. 23:24). "Where is Abel thy brother?" (Gen. 4:9). Said Cain to Him: I do not know; why should you ask me for him?—I wish to ask you where he is. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: Wicked one, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10).

Am I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9).

Cain said: You are the keeper of all creation and yet you ask for him at my hands? To what may this be likened? To a thief who stole jewels at night and was not caught. In the morning the watchman caught him. Said he to him: Why did you steal the jewels? Said he: I am a thief and I have not forsaken my occupation, but your occupation is to keep watch at the gate, why did you forsake it?

And thus Cain said: I killed him—you created the evil urge in me, you keep watch over everything, and yet you allowed me to kill him? You are the one who killed him! For if you had received my sacrifice as you did his, I would not have envied him.

AND CAIN SAID UNTO THE LORD, MY PUNISHMENT IS GREATER THAN I CAN BEAR (Gen. 4:13).

Cain said: Lord of the universe! Are there slanderers who speak evil of man before you? Behold, my father and my mother are both on earth and they do not know that I killed him, and you are in heaven, whence do you know? Said the Holy One, blessed be He: Fool! I bear the whole of the world. Said Cain: You bear the whole of the world, and you cannot bear my punishment? "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: As you have repented, go now and be exiled from this place – immediately. "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod" (Gen. 4:16).

As Cain went, in every place that he passed the earth trembled beneath him. And the wild beasts and animals would tremble and say: Who is this? Saying to one another: Cain killed Abel his brother and the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded him: "A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be" (Gen. 4:12)—let us approach and eat him. And they would gather together and draw near him to claim Abel's blood.

In that hour the tears flowed from Cain's eyes and he said:

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

"If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

"Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:7-10).

Said the Holy One, blessed be He: "Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold" (Gen. 4:15).

AND THE LORD SET A MARK UPON CAIN (Gen. 4:15).

Rav said: He gave him a dog. Abba Yosi says: He grew a horn on his head.

AND CAIN WENT FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD (Gen. 4:16).

He went out happily. The first man met him. Said he to Cain: What has been done concerning your sentence? Said Cain to him: I have repented and was pardoned. The first man began to beat his own face and say: Such is the power of repentance and I did not know it! Immediately the first man stood up and said :"A psalm, a song. For the Sabbath day. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Ps. 82:1-2).

SAID Rabbi Jeremiah ben Elazar: All those years when the first man was in a state of excommunication he begot spirits and devils and demons, as it is said: "And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness after his image" (Gen. 5:3)—which is to say that until then he begot them unlike his own image.

They asked Abba Cohen bar Dala concerning the generations "Adam, Seth, Enosh," and the interruption which follows (Gen. 4:26). Said he: Up until then they were begotten in the image and the likeness, from then on the generations decayed and centaurs were born.

Four things changed in the days of Enosh, son of Seth: The mountains became craggy, dead bodies began to bring forth worms, the faces of men became like those of monkeys [less like that of the Lord], and men became more easily subject to injury.

AND THE LORD SAID, I WILL DESTROY MAN (Gen. 6:7).

This may be compared to a king who built a palace and filled it with mute tenants, and they would rise early and would greet the king with gestures and by crooking their finger and waving their kerchiefs. Said the king: What of these mute creatures, rising early and greeting me with gestures and with crooking of the finger and waving of kerchiefs—if they could speak they would be able to do so much more! Whereupon the king filled it with tenants capable of speech who rose up and seized the palace, saying: This palace does not belong to the king, it belongs to us! Said the king: Let the palace return to what it was. Thus, at the beginning of the creation of the world, God's praise only rose up from the waters, as it is said: ". . . than the noise of many waters" (Ps. 93:4). What did they say? "The Lord on high is mightier!" (*ibid.*). Said the Holy One, blessed be He: What of these [the waters] who have neither speech nor language, and yet they praise me; if I create man, how much the more so! Whereupon the generation of Enoch rose up and rebelled against Him, the generation of the flood rose up and rebelled against Him. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: Let those be cleared away and let those [the waters] come.

### AND EVERY LIVING SUBSTANCE WAS DESTROYED WHICH WAS UPON THE FACE OF THE GROUND, BOTH MAN AND CATTLE (Gen. 7:23).

If man sinned, how did the cattle sin? Learn by way of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha: This resembles the man who arranged a wedding canopy for his son and ordered all kinds of feasting foods. After several days his son died—whereupon he took the canopy apart. Said he: Did I make these preparations for anyone save my son, and now that he is dead, why should I keep the canopy? So the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Did I create the wild beasts and the cattle for anyone save man, and now that man has sinned, what use are the wild beasts and the cattle to me?

WHEN the generation of the flood rose up and served false gods the Holy One, blessed be He, grew sad, whereupon the two angels, Shemchazai and Azael, rose up and said to Him: Lord of the universe, did we not say when you created the world: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4). Said He to them: And what will become of the world? Said they to Him. Lord of the universe, we should be contented with it. Said He to them: It is clear and apparent to me that if you should dwell on earth the evil urge would come upon you and you would be worse than man. Said they to Him: Give us permission that we may live among earthly creatures and you shall see how we sanctify your Name. Said He to them: Descend and dwell with them. Whereupon the angels disgraced themselves with the daughters of men, for they were beautiful and the angels were not able to conquer their urge.

Shemchazai saw a maiden called Istahar and let his eyes rest upon her. Said he: Listen to me. Said she: I shall not listen to you unless you give me your wings and teach me the Tetragrammaton, by means of which you rise into the sky when you remember it.

Thereupon he gave her his wings and taught her the Tetragrammaton. She remembered it and rose into the sky—and he did not seduce her. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: As she has removed herself from sin, let her be placed among these seven stars—and she was placed in the midst of the Pleiades. When Shemchazai and Azael saw this they decided to take women in marriage, and Shemchazai begot sons: Hiva and Haya.

Shemchazai turned in repentance and hung himself between earth and heaven, his head below and his legs above, and he is still hanging there in repentance. Azael did not turn in repentance and remains in disgrace to this day.

### FOR ALL FLESH HAD CORRUPTED HIS WAY (Gen. 6:12).

Said Rabbi Azariah for Rabbi Yehuda bar Simon: Everyone corrupted his way in the generation of the flood—the dog would go to the wolf and the rooster would go to the peacock. Rabbi Luliani bar Tivrin said for Rabbi Yitzhak: Even the earth was wanton—they would sow her with wheat and she would bring forth tares. These are the tares of the generation of the flood.

### AND LAMECH TOOK UNTO HIM TWO WIVES (Gen. 4:19).

Said Rabbi Azariah for Rabbi Yehuda bar Simon: This is what the men of the generation of the flood would do: each one would take unto himself two wives, one for procreation and one for sexual intercourse. The one who was for procreation would sit there as if a widow in her husband's life; and the one who was for sexual intercourse was given drinks to make her sterile so that she would not give birth, and would sit with him decorated like a whore.

# "THE INDELIBLE SEAL"

## *A German Novel of the Pilgrimage of Faith*

### HERMANN BROCH

ELISABETH LANGGÄSSER'S novel *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* ("The Indelible Seal"), published last year in Hamburg, belongs among those contemporary works of art that make one wonder whether they are decadent products of a fading age, or harbingers of a new aesthetic mode. Presumably this book is both. Elisabeth Langgässer is a poet and—in contrast to the mere novelist—has the power to evoke the new.

THE plot of *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* is simple, so simple as to be almost confusing. Around 1906 Lazare Belfontaine arrives in a small town in Rheinhessen, Germany. He is a well-to-do, cultured, and good-looking man of Jewish origin who was educated in France. His grandparents and great-grandparents had lived in the small town in Rheinhessen before him, though probably under another name. Shortly after his arrival he falls in love with Elisabeth, a beautiful, very serious girl and a pious Catholic; she is the daughter and heiress of Ignaz Schweickert, wholesaler and owner of a store. Belfontaine has no qualms about having himself baptized in order to marry her, but afterwards, during seven years of married life, he realizes more and more that his baptism was not a mere empty formality. Eventually his comfortable daily routine becomes quite incomprehensible to him, and his familiar surroundings, the town and its inhabitants, take on a monstrous aspect. An overpowering force has entered his soul and become so threatening that flight begins to seem the only way out—flight that is offered and suggested by the Tempter, who shows up suddenly in the person of his old French schoolmaster, M. Tricheur.

It is 1914, and Belfontaine's flight brings him back to France where, because of the outbreak of the war and the closing of the frontiers, he disappears from view so far as his German life is concerned. In France he marries again and settles in the old Gallic town of Senlis, near Paris. His second wife, Suzette, is carefree and notorious; his new marriage itself is an elegant and highly voluptuous love affair. The next seven years—by an artfully contrived coincidence—repeat the pattern of his life in Rheinhessen on a more spiritual and sophisticated level, but this period does not end simply in flight; it ends in his final break-through to Christianity. During an almost supernatural thunderstorm (in the course of which his wife becomes the victim of a murder motivated by sexual passion) Belfontaine is overcome by the deepest contrition and, shaken by the violence of this experience, he sees for the first time the meaning of his baptism.

This is the turning point of the novel. Now he can fulfill the meaning of his last name; and he returns, as he must, to the beautiful spring (*belfontaine*), forever out

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**HERMANN BROCH** sees in the work of the German novelist Elisabeth Langgässer a profound aesthetic response to the spiritual crisis of our age. Mr. Broch himself is one of the leading figures in modern literature, author of *The Sleepwalkers* (1930; republished in this country in 1948) and *The Death of Virgil* (1945). Mr. Broch was born in Vienna in 1886 and is now living in New Haven, Connecticut. This article is translated from the German by Martin Greenberg.

of the Tempter's reach. Subsequent events are sketched briefly; the goal is reached, and it is beyond novelistic expression, for the soul in peace is silent. Belfontaine goes back to Germany a second time, but now his flight is a pilgrimage. Several years later, under Hitler, he is arrested as a Christian Jew and deported to Poland, only to be miraculously delivered from the concentration camp in order to bear witness to God as a holy wandering beggar endowed with the power of healing. Such is the main plot, simple in itself but embedded in a luxuriance of minor figures and events. At the end there is an epilogue of truly apocalyptic force.

According to the author's own interpretation, expressed in her prologue, *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* might well be called a surrealist book and indeed it is perhaps the first both to deserve that name and to confer distinction on it. The seemingly arbitrary and disconnected succession of its scenes, as well as the sharp contours that set them off from each other, correspond unmistakably to what goes under the name of surrealism in painting. This same surrealism informs the characters of the book and the description of their inner lives.

Like all surrealist works, *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* reveals a striking affinity with romanticism, and even—after all, it *is* a German book—with Biedermeier. This is entirely natural, and it has nothing to do with eclecticism; the history of literature in the course of its ups and downs shows us many such little revivals of earlier forms of expression. Nevertheless, whether natural or artificial, spontaneous or contrived, the romantic revival of older forms is not without its danger: romanticism always tends toward the exhibition of a certain demonic behavior. The demonic behavior, for instance, of the romantic virtuoso, which—as Goethe has pilloried it—is the delight of the petty bourgeois. Moreover, a certain feebleness is always present when an obsolete aesthetic mode is put to modern uses. And demonism and feebleness are indeed to be detected in Langgässer's book, in spite of its exceptional force—an extraordinary force that makes the book itself extraordinary.

In human life feebleness is often the result of a split personality, of its discords and divisions. The inner conflicts of *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* are undeniable; in many respects the book resembles a split personality —but it is exactly in this that the real justification of the book's existence lies.

This conflict manifests itself most prominently in the author's attitude toward Catholicism. In spite of its avowed Catholicism and its persistence in addressing itself to Catholic problems, the whole novel, with everything that goes on inside it, with its whole outer and inner landscape, is enveloped in an atmosphere of blasphemous wickedness. This book is further evidence that a person with real faith doesn't have to talk about it, and that only those struggling with skepticism bring faith up as an issue. It may be said that, in the final analysis, there is no such thing as Catholic or any other sort of religious *belles lettres*, or even fiction; rather that the "poetry of faith" always derives from something heretical.

To come to an understanding with oneself in the matter of faith is a large undertaking, and for its achievement merely psychological tools do not suffice. Elisabeth Langgässer's book is not a psychological novel, in spite of the paramount role that sex or the rejection of sex—which amounts to the same thing—plays in it. Both — sex and its rejection — are here part of the impulse that leads to the search for faith; that is, the ascetic ideal is sought in the Christian. A deep and one might even say lascivious knowledge of all the varieties of eroticism, sexuality, and homosexuality is displayed with merciless candor all through the work, and everywhere it points to a question that is—artfully—left unspoken: "What is love? What in God's name makes sense in all this lust and copulation? Why is it so inescapable, so terribly necessary? Oh, poor human being!" These questions conceal an overriding sexual nostalgia for that romantic, even Victorian, sexual morality whose adherents sought through permanent spiritual ecstasy to free themselves from impotence and frigidity; but one also discerns in this morality the old contrast between earthly and celestial love, and a fear of the demonic forces that the human being can never escape and which come between him and God.

Earthly love is a demonic force that has to be rejected; and it transforms the characters of this novel into phantoms of flesh and blood. They are described throughout in the most carnal terms, in all their hairiness and boniness, from every physical point of view, with all their sweat pores and their skin blemishes as well as with their fleshly appetites for food, drink, and sex. And yet, in the most extraordinary fashion, the more precise and detailed its physical delineation, the more unreal the character becomes; nothing is more spectral than puppets made solely of flesh and blood; they are corpses who, when they embrace, commit acts of desecration on their own bodies. There is probably no more effective way to attack the erotic than by glorifying it in such lascivious and funereal fashion.

When the erotic undergoes so radical an attack or suppression, the particular and the individual are also suppressed. But at the same time this suppression makes the work of fiction transcend the psychological realm and raises it to a sphere of its own, beyond psychology. Here again Langgässer's book reminds one of modern painting—this time not of the pseudo-modernity of surrealism, but of attempts like Picasso's to reach new and possibly deeper—or higher—levels of reality. These are attempts in the last resort to capture reality's very "essence" by purely graphic means. In this effort to push further into reality, there is disclosed to us the act of cognition of art; and though art's act of cognition can never entirely eliminate the element of the contingent—on the contrary has always to address itself to a contingent, empirical object, or at least to one beheld by the inner eye—it strives to see in the contingent object the totality of the world whose intrinsic reality it symbolizes. The particular dwindles away more and more: art no longer "portrays" the contingent and the individual, but strives to capture shapes "in themselves," the human being in himself, the human smile in itself, horror in itself, etc.; it is the means by which we transcend the contingency in general and win as it were a direct approach to the universal, however "abstract" that may seem.

And to express its discovery of new realities, art has to devise new vocabularies. Visual or graphic means are much better suited to this purpose than verbal or poetic ones; abstract expression is related to mathematical expression, and painting, because of its broadly geometrical structure, has an access to a non-objectivism from which language and literature are nearly completely excluded. It is one of the great achievements of *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* that it succeeds in overcoming this exclusion, and that it achieves a de-individualized, more or less abstract view of the world at no cost in poetic quality.

Because it is an authentic work of literary art, the book is thoroughly modern despite its romanticism. Because everything individual is eliminated, it is a paradigmatic expression of our age, and of its depreciation of the individual human being and the individual soul. Because it is full of this depreciation, it shows how little disposed modern man is to do anything for his own existence as an individual soul and an individual ego; it shows how much, indeed, he wants to extirpate his own individuality and degrade himself to a simple executant of commands—to a puppet of the uncontrolled and the uncontrollable, indifferent as to whether he is ruled by instinct from within or by force from without. His own personality and the personalities of his fellow men are no longer of any interest to him. This spiritual indifference to others and oneself is a main part of the psychological basis upon which fascism was built—and can be rebuilt. This indifference moreover is also the basis of the present de-eroticization of the world. Love, reduced to a pattern, has discovered in the movies its proper puppet-like character; wherever love is practiced, it falls within the same sad and fundamentally prosaic pattern, so that rape in the enemy's country and marriage at home become not very unlike each other. It is a conventional necessity to which one has to yield, and the partners in full consciousness, without confusion or passion, yield to it in the selfsame way that they submit to the pursuit of success—which is another duty. Love or success, they are both games, "must" games, played in the external world, games whose rules the participants do not understand and do not want to understand but to which they nevertheless submit without protest. This is the way in which the characters in *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* behave, and they do it with so much consciousness that for their every act they punctiliously supply a motive, and a motive for that motive; yet they know that this endless chain implies an inexorable submission. Seen thus, the novel pictures—in mood, not in intention—the fascistic framework of our world.

Nothing in the world is unequivocal, however, and a good many things are contradictory. Though mankind's attention seems to be directed wholly outwards, though the human being has withdrawn into blind indifference, and though he may think that he has to get along as best he can with his conscious rationality—yet his metaphysical sense, striving to transcend what is simply experienced, i.e., the visible and the rational, goes on working: secretly, so to speak, and it won't let itself be curbed. It is precisely in art—but not the official art of fascism and totalitarianism—that we find proof of this. It is in *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* and in its striving to dissolve everything singular and individual that we see how the final extinction—or subjugation—of the human person may evoke new hope for the redemption of the ego, hope for its return: because then the singular, being really dissolved in the universal, is (a Hegelian idea) raised to its true and essential reality. That eradication of the human which is now going forward everywhere in the world is—in a quite mysterious way—directed by a need for salvation, a need that supposes almost magically that complete destruction must first take place, the destruction of everything that exists, of everything traditional—because tradition has become identified with the cliché—and that only this complete destruction, finally extended to everything that can say "I," will restore and redeem the human ego. Self-sacrifice must precede redemption.

Feeling that such a mystique is endangered by its propinquity to fascism, according to which—though only in the realm of simple experience—destruction and redemption do not succeed each other but become one, Elisabeth Langgässer turns at this point towards Catholicism; for the sake of true redemption, as distinct from destruction, a second level has to be reached, a level forever inaccessible to earthly experience: the realm of faith, the great unknown reality standing behind all events and all particularity. Faith as such is indefinable, and conceptual understanding can approach it only negatively, by a method of isolation similar to that of phenomenological existentialism. Faith does not lie in good works, not in the recognition and avoidance of sin, not in devotion to the church, least of all in the aestheticizing devotion which is based on admiration for the inward and outward beauty of the cult. Not even the saint who has experienced miracles in his own person knows anything of faith, for were he to know it he would lose his saintliness, and therefore he must close his eyes to such knowledge. All this is Christianity in the individual but not faith as such; it pertains to the single personality and fades away when he or she—in a real theological process, as is shown by Elisabeth Langgässer's book—has his or her particular ego extinguished.

But to what knowledge does this negativist method finally lead? It may be that by a continual encounter and struggle with the Devil one can come closest to the "process of faith," if not to faith itself, and that we must resign ourselves to believing this: that there is such a thing as baptism, and that in it a readiness for faith exists. This is the "indelible seal."

The subject is a tremendous one for a book and, as it need hardly be remarked, one so mighty that it threatens to burst the ordinary limits of the novel form and collapse in sheer emptiness—unless handled by a master of Elisabeth Langgässer's caliber. In her case this subject becomes a source of richness and greatness, filling every sentence to overflowing. *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* is a witches' and angels' brew whose depths boil and seethe continually; its surface—whose prose is moved by the densest yet most delicate agitation ever seen in German—is iridescent. But is art and its magic really able to transmit the truth *of* faith or can it transmit only the truth *about* faith? The Sibyl at work here is compelled to practice conjurers' tricks, tricks of a very precious, very ingenious sort, as she plays constantly with the possibilities of romantic irony and its didactical tendencies, breaking open the novel form and then re-closing it with the next *tour de main*. All this great and rich art asks too much from art, proves only that art itself is too blasphemous for this tremendous problem: no work of art really reaches the sphere of faith.

Lazare Belfontaine attains step by step to a spiritual resurrection—as symbolized by his rescue from the concentration camp in Poland—and thereby he resembles the Lazarus of whom Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." As a beggar, however, Belfontaine resembles that other Lazarus whose sores the dogs lick, and who finally returns to Abraham's bosom. The reader is asked to believe that the events of this story are not due to mere chance, but form a miracle because of the indelible seal stamped on the Jew Belfontaine by the act of baptism. Is this demand, however, ineluctable? The believer, the Catholic believer, certainly, will yield to it—but the others? Believers of other faiths? The atheist? Will they be converted to Catholicism by this Catholic book and the miraculous happenings described in it?

And even more: has the author convinced herself? For artistically or scientifically, in all honest creative work the author aims to prove to and for himself, and basically only himself, something that his intuition or his ethical feeling claims to be certainly true. Even in music this cognitive element retains its dominant role. Nobody can doubt that a piece of art like *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* is oriented on this cognitive honesty, all the more because Catholicism is at stake: out of the heretical atmosphere of the book (and that means out of the author's heretical doubts) the Catholic faith is to emerge with its victorious sanctity symbolized by the indelible baptismal seal—which is the only fact that remains when all the accessory Christian qualities such as good works, the avoidance of sin, and devotion to the Church, nay, even sainthood, are blasted away.

YET here the author stops, leaving unanswered a question that the reader still has the right to ask: namely, what is meant by the mystical act of baptism? It is all the more important to know this since the author shows that all the other features of Catholicism are not intrinsic or essential. What is this sheer abstract core? What is this indelible remaining faith or readiness of faith? Doesn't this sound like a very deep-rooted agnosticism? And surprisingly enough, the answer is yes: there exists such an agnosticism, for there exists such a very abstract religion—in which it is forbidden even to pronounce God's name—and it is the religion to which Jesus himself adhered: Judaism, the faith in which he himself was baptized.

Of course, this conclusion is not intended by the author. However, it becomes an almost inevitable one when we read her book. For *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel,* conceived as it was in the midst of the Hitlerian nightmare—itself centered in anti-Semitism—was bound to become a book about Judaism, one might even say a Jewish book: Elisabeth Langgässer, a Catholic and concerned with Catholic problems, intended to write a book about the baptized Jew Belfontaine, but the poet in her would not but hear that mute voice which hovers over the soil of Germany, the voice of six million murdered Jews, almost none of whom were baptized, the voice of martyrs killed, not for the sake of their race (as their murderer imagined), but for that of their faith, or at least for the sake of the faith of their fathers. Hearing this voice, the poet, though not daring to say or even to know it, had to restore to the indelible seal its original and highly abstract meaning, the meaning of that Jewish baptism which Jesus received from John. And when Belfontaine becomes in the end a holy pilgrim one wonders whether the baptism that confers this role on him is Catholic or Jewish.

The author may say that this interpretation of her work is forced, a heresy she never intended; and she may also say that, if she did not succeed in awakening Catholic faith in the reader, this new interpretation or aspect of her book will not convert an atheist to Judaism either. She would surely be right, for no poetical work possesses the power to convert. But in any case, the wonderful image of the wandering Jew, Belfontaine, will provide even the non-believer with a basic verity: namely, that faith is the process of an eternal pilgrimage.

# THE STUDY OF MAN

## AMERICA'S SOCIAL CLASSES

### *Is Equality a Myth?*

### WALTER R. GOLDSCHMIDT

IT IS a primary function of any religion to explain and justify society to the population, and in societies where religious belief is wanting, it falls to popular philosophy to discover some rational order in social relationships and institutions. In the modern world, with its faith in science, the rationalization must be couched in scientific terms and supported by the paraphernalia of the sciences; thus the task of explaining the social system is taken over by sociology and the academic study of American social life. But such rationalizations have more than an academic significance—once stated, they may themselves play an important role in influencing society by confirming existing tendencies.

The new sociology of social class in America, as it is being developed by W. Lloyd Warner and his many students, serves as more than a mere description or reflection of our order. Bringing to the study of class a particular point of view, it bids fair to help mold the class system of our society according to a set pattern, in line not only with what Warner sees, but with what he preconceives as fitting and proper. Nature is said sometimes to copy art; society perhaps copies artifice. For this reason the meaning and impact of Warner's views are doubly worth critical examination; and particularly must we examine the moral ideology implicit in the theoretical foundation of this class analysis.

Mr. Warner is a professor of anthropology and education at the University of Chicago. He is among those anthropologists who have turned from the exotic and obscure—in his case the Australian blackfellow—to the immediate and everyday. (See Robert Endleman, "The New Anthropology and Its Ambitions," COMMENTARY, September 1949). Specifically he studied the American community, vigorously, repeatedly, and with single-minded purpose. He spent several years, aided by a platoon of graduate students, codifying the lives of the people of Newburyport, Massachusetts, and has thus far published four volumes on them (*The Social Life of a Modern Community*, 1941; *The Status System of a Modern Community*, 1942; *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups*, 1945; and *The Social System of the Modern Factory*, 1947, all put out by Yale University Press under the general title of "The Yankee City Series"). He has also made or supported studies in the South (*Deep South*, by Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner), the Middle West (*Elmtown's Youth*, by A. B. Hollingshead, and *Democracy in Jonesville*, by W. L. Warner), and among the Negroes in Chicago (*Black Metropolis*, by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton). To date he has himself been author or co-author of eight books on the American social system. More than that, his underlying hypothesis has been adopted by independent workers as a source of academic inspiration.

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IN THE work of W. Lloyd Warner and his associates, we are offered a full-scale theory of the nature and effect of class distinctions in American society, a theory which has already begun to influence practices in such fields as education and industrial relations. WALTER R. GOLDSCHMIDT here examines the social and moral implications of Warner's work. Mr. Goldschmidt is associate professor of anthropology and sociology at the University of California. He was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1913, and attended the Universities of Texas and California.

WHAT is the Warner thesis? It is that American society is not the warm clime of equality and social freedom it is advertised to be, but is divided into clearly distinguishable social classes, six in number. The hypothesis was developed in Warner's study of Newburyport, where he codified the social lives and economic activities of the whole population: "We worked out empirically, by direct observation of a fairly large sample of the total population, the existence of six stratified classes."

Though he had originally postulated a direct relation between social status and economic position, Warner found that in the estimate of a person's rank by others in the community, non-economic criteria were brought to bear. These criteria seemed to include the ability to "act right," knowing how to spend money, associating with the right people, area of residence, the length of time a family had resided in town, and membership in various formal associations. Warner defined the classes set up by these criteria as follows: "By class is meant two or more orders of people who are believed to be, and are accordingly ranked by the members of the community, in socially superior and inferior positions. Members of a class tend to marry within their own order, but the values of the society permit marriage up and down. A class system also provides that children are born in the same status as their parents. A class society distributes rights and privileges, duties and obligations, unequally among its inferior and superior grades. A system of classes . . . provides by its own values for movement up and down the social ladder." (*The Social Life of a Modern Community.*)

One of Warner's most recent books is a detailed statement of the method by which one determines any person's class position. Here he develops two basic techniques, the Evaluated Participation (E.P.) technique and the Index of Status Characteristics (I.S.C.). The first "is posed on the proposition that those who interact in the social system of a community evaluate the participation of those around them, that the place where the individual participates is evaluated, and that the members of the community are explicitly or implicitly aware of the ranking and translate their evaluations of social participation into social class ratings that can be communicated to the investigator." (W. Lloyd Warner, Marchia Meeker, and Kenneth Eells, *Social Class in America,* 1949). In the final analysis, this means that a person's class position is determined by the verbalized statements of "intelligent and observant" citizens of the community, substantiated as well as possible by a detailed record of social intercourse which shows "who has to do with whom."

The second method (I.S.C.) is simpler, and assumes that a person's class position may be approximated without discovering his social associates but simply by ascertaining four facts about him: his occupation, his source of income, the type of home in which he lives, and the residence area in which it is located. Each of these facts is rated on a 7-point scale. The occupational categories are carefully worked out, and the subject's score is determined not only by the major classes of occupation (business, professional, farm, skilled labor, unskilled labor) but also by the size of the enterprise in which he is engaged and his particular type of work. A subject's rating on the "sources of income" scale is determined by whether his income derives from (1) inherited wealth, (2) earned wealth, (3) profits and fees, (4) salary, (5) wages, (6) private relief, or (7) public relief. The evaluation of homes is based upon their size and condition, while the "residence area" credit has to be established separately for each community.

Though the criteria appear precise, one is not always certain just how they are applied. Thus, in his earlier work Warner indicates a rather subjective procedure: "If a person was a member of several charitable organizations, a social club or two, and possibly an occupational association, but not of a fraternal lodge, and he was not considered a member of the new or old families of Hill Streeters, it was more likely that he was upper-middle class. A small amount of interviewing soon demonstrated whether this was true or not." (*The Social Life of a Modern Community.*)

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As John P. Marquand suggests in his novel *Point of No Return,* Warner has reduced a complex status hierarchy and an intricate set of personal relationships to a system. His classes are based upon the general awareness of social standing and upon local names for certain kinds of social position as indicative of social prestige. Whether they may properly be called "classes" is a question which professional sociologists have raised. Except for the upper groups, for example, they are not self-conscious entities with group identification and loyalty on the part of their members, like the estates of European society. Nor are they classes in the politico-economic sense; indeed, while Warner notes that the classes differ in authority and power, he nowhere relates his classes to the power system of the community.

We need not here examine further the methodological and theoretical problems involved in Warner's work; my purpose is to examine its moral implications.

The story of "Big Sister," a daytime radio serial, will demonstrate how Warner's sociology impinges on the moral and political. Warner and a psychologist from the University of Chicago recently studied the effect of the soap opera on the middle-class woman (W. Lloyd Warner and William E. Henry, "The Radio Day-time Serial: A Symbolic Analysis," *Genetic Psychology Monographs,* Vol. 37, February 1948). This study is addressed strictly to the academic fraternity and utilizes the apparatus of scientific investigation. The sixty-odd subjects of the analysis were selected from the lower-middle class (those scoring 4.5 on Mr. Warner's Index of Status Characteristics), or, in Warner's terms, the level of the Common Man (the capitalization is Warner's). These women, we are told, are economically dependent upon their husbands; their world is limited to the dreary confines of their homes; their moral code is strict and repressive. By use of the Thematic Apperception Test, in which the subject projects his personality in narratives he makes up about standardized pictures, the authors show that the subjects are psychologically restricted, unimaginative, and anxious. Anxiety is called forth particularly by the subjects' relations with other people in the narrow world they inhabit, that is, with their husbands, their children, and the actual or anticipated "other woman."

It is into such lives that "Big Sister" comes, in various guises, throughout the day, five days a week. As the writers who grind out the material well know, they are dramatizing in large the petty annoyances, the minor crises, the sorrows and frustrations of these lower-middle-class women. To solve these problems, they re-create the image of the woman in the form of a heroine in simple-but-stylish armor, who slays the dragons of evil and strengthens the weak. Warner and Henry call these stories our "latter-day morality plays."

The authors "discover little or nothing to confirm" the attacks that psychiatrists and the public press have made on such programs. Indeed, they found that the programs "functioned very much like a folk tale, expressing the hopes and fears of their female audience, and on the whole contributed to the integration of their lives into the world in which they lived." And this solace is important: "Therein lie hope and confidence for those who listen to daytime serials and, it is not too much to say, for our culture. The women of the level of the Common Man carry the heavy load of tradition and convention wherein are stored our most treasured beliefs and valued sentiments. . . . It is no accident that these women are rigidly trained and are under constant constraint, for our cultural stability and the continuance of our way of life are greatly dependent upon them."

A group of five middle-class career women were studied as a contrast or "control." These women were found to be freer in their emotional life than the other women studied; not subject to the same "subordination, limitations and strict routines." They were persons with more control over their social environment; and they were not persons who habitually listened to the radio daytime serials. Indeed, they found the stories to be essentially unreal; the characters too transparent to serve as models for conduct; and the drama incapable of offering a formula by which they could meet their own problems. The authors say that this control group is more subject to neuroses and imply that their incapability of accepting a clearly structured image of their role, as offered by "Big

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It is into such lives that "Big Sister" comes, in various guises, throughout the day, five days a week. As the writers who grind out the material well know, they are dramatizing in large the petty annoyances, the minor crises, the sorrows and frustrations of these lower-middle-class women. To solve these problems, they re-create the image of the woman in the form of a heroine in simple-but-stylish armor, who slays the dragons of evil and strengthens the weak. Warner and Henry call these stories our "latter-day morality plays."

The authors "discover little or nothing to confirm" the attacks that psychiatrists and the public press have made on such programs. Indeed, they found that the programs "functioned very much like a folk tale, expressing the hopes and fears of their female audience, and on the whole contributed to the integration of their lives into the world in which they lived." And this solace is important: "Therein lie hope and confidence for those who listen to daytime serials and, it is not too much to say, for our culture. The women of the level of the Common Man carry the heavy load of tradition and convention wherein are stored our most treasured beliefs and valued sentiments. . . . It is no accident that these women are rigidly trained and are under constant constraint, for our cultural stability and the continuance of our way of life are greatly dependent upon them."

A group of five middle-class career women were studied as a contrast or "control." These women were found to be freer in their emotional life than the other women studied; not subject to the same "subordination, limitations and strict routines." They were persons with more control over their social environment; and they were not persons who habitually listened to the radio daytime serials. Indeed, they found the stories to be essentially unreal; the characters too transparent to serve as models for conduct; and the drama incapable of offering a formula by which they could meet their own problems. The authors say that this control group is more subject to neuroses and imply that their incapability of accepting a clearly structured image of their role, as offered by "Big

Sister," is a major factor in their neurotic vulnerability.

What the authors are saying is that the soap operas give the lower-middle-class woman a psychological support in her deprived social position. "The listeners had confidence in the future and believed that moral strength and social astuteness would solve all problems. . . . The effect of the 'Big Sister' program is to direct their hopes into confident and optimistic channels." That these channels were essentially unrealistic in terms of the everyday life of the women at the level of the Common Man, is viewed neither as damaging to them nor detrimental to their (and our) social world.

If American society is made up of fixed social classes with varying prestige and social satisfactions, then it follows that any social device which renders life within the class more tolerable is necessarily good. Such seems to be the line of reasoning that leads Warner and Henry to approve of "Big Sister." But if one sees the social situation as more dynamic, if one regards as unhealthy for democracy the existence of a body of people who accept a dream situation and apathy, then the daytime radio serial is harmful to the extent that it perpetuates such a pattern.

It would seem obvious that the authors' belief that the effect of a radio daytime serial is "good" reflects a morality implicit in the class theory that underlies the study. The character of this underlying morality comes out even more forcefully when Warner and his students treat two more crucial areas of American life.

WARNER is currently associated with a group engaged in research for indusrial organization, but has published only one work in the field. This is the fourth volume of his "Yankee City Series" (W. Lloyd Warner and J. O. Low, *The Social System of the Modern Factory*), where the authors endeavor to explain the outbreak of a successful strike and the subsequent unionization of the shoe industry in Newburyport in 1933.

Giving full recognition to the extreme economic pressures of that depression period, and to the effect of international markets upon the local industries, they are nevertheless impressed with the uniqueness of the situation: "When searching for the answers to why such significant new changes could occur in Yankee City, the evidence is clear that economic factors are of prime importance. But before we are content to accept them as the only answers to our problems, let us once more remind ourselves (1) that there had been severe depressions and low wages before and the unions had failed to organize the workers, and (2) that the last and most powerful strike which preceded the present one occurred not in a depression but during a boom period. . . . Other factors are necessary and must be found if we are to understand the strike. . . ."

These other factors are found in the depersonalization of the industry, the lowered demand for skill in carrying out manufacturing operations, the diminished social standing of the workers, their lessened sense of community participation, and the lack of opportunity for individuals to rise in the job hierarchy. In short, industrialization had taken place.

A strike by its very nature involves a division into two camps, inevitably in opposition, and clashing over the distribution of power. Warner is aware that the issue is one of control and power: "In the first period [of the strike], when management and the unions fought desperately to gain control over the workers, the union was successful in organizing the workers, and management was prevented from gaining control." He is aware that the unions were conscious of the need to organize workers as a group against factory owners as a group, for he notes that strikers were placed on picket lines of shops in which they were not employed so that the workers would sense that the fight was "against factory owners in general and not . . . against factory owners in a particular plant." And management, Warner notes, discriminates against educated workers because "individuals of the two lower classes make more docile employees."

But the essential dynamic in this whole situation, to Warner, is that the shoe workers were not getting the "non-economic" satisfactions of status and prestige that would keep them happy and satisfied in their powerless roles. He notes with alarm that the shoe workers have fewer social contacts among the people in the three top classes than other members of their class. It is this which troubles him, not that they have no control over management, and it is this social situation of workers which is "a cause for deep concern." "What is denied [the workers] as individuals in working relations, they have sought to gain by collective action through union membership. . . . The shoe worker's sense of security is enhanced by the knowledge that he and his kind are firmly banded together to defend their common interests against the conflicting interests of the owner-management group. . . . Membership in a labor union also gives the shoe operative an opportunity to compete for prestige by election or appointment to office in the union."

Finally, extending this principle to the general American scene, Warner and Low say: "It can be assumed that this blocking of mobility in industry should result in strengthening the two opposing forces, separating them further, and increasing the number of clashes between them. The frustrations of 'ambitious workers' trying to rise in the world and take their families with them are the source of common grievances against those above. The decreasing sense of worth and significance on the job felt by all workers adds to the feeling of being stopped by someone or something that is against them. Part of the great strength of labor unions in the United States can be traced to these factors. The unions act as agents to express the common hopes—and bitterness—of the workers."

This is an interesting and rather special view of the role of industrial conflict in our society. The issue is not, as we might have thought, that the workers want more leisure and higher income, more security now and in old age, but rather that they are not getting "social satisfactions." And the unions, in fighting for the former rather than the latter, are ignoring the nub of the problem. Thus the way is opened to the suggestion that workers might be satisfied not by increased material gains, but by increased rewards in prestige.

THIS was the view of Elton Mayo, the late professor of industrial research in the Harvard School of Business Administration, which sponsored the study of Newburyport. Professor Mayo, on the basis of a famous study of the Hawthorne plant of the General Electric Company which showed that workers responded with increased output to the special attention they received when they were singled out for research, had suggested that the worker is not concerned primarily with economic rewards. He is rather seeking social satisfaction, and will find more of it in spontaneously organized groups binding those of common background than in special organizations based upon economic interests. Mayo himself found the salvation of society to lie in an administrative elite, organizing production to give the workers these social satisfactions.

Mr. Warner not only accepts Mayo's view of industrial relations, but with his six-class system gives it an elaborate and convincing rationalization. If the six classes are the basic structure of American society, and the desire to rise from one class to another is its fundamental dynamic, then union organization is an extraneous agent which can offer only surrogate satisfaction, not the real rewards of prestige and belonging. We then see how important it is to divorce the status system from economics. If class position and the prestige it grants were simply dependent on income, then it would be impossible to deny the overriding importance of economic considerations in the workers' role as employee. By suggesting that the desire of the workers is actually to achieve acceptance quite independent of economics, the main function of the union is shown to be beside the point.

Finally, the multi-class system denies the reality of a clash of interests; it substitutes the pleasant notion of a hierarchy, in which each person finds his proper God-given place, for the cruder reality of a quite irrational existing divergence in income and power, with all its inequities and frustrations but subject to betterment through individual and group rebellion and struggle. And it is this acceptance of the social hierarchy, it appears from a close reading of Warner, that he offers as the solution to the problem of class in America—not the effort to reduce the differences of power and income between different classes. Thus: "There are many who believe the increasing power exercised by the political, economical, and associational organizations of the workers will result in an equalitarian society. The present writers do not share this opinion."

IT IS on the public school systems of America that the class theory of Warner has had its greatest impact. American educators are notoriously eager for technical gadgets, and the Warner scheme (brought to their attention in *Who Shall Be Educated?*, 1944, a book by Warner, Robert J. Havighurst, and Martin B. Loeb, and in countless articles) has appealed to them just as much as intelligence tests, personality inventories, and sociometrics: each has had its vogue and left its mark on the field.

The first result of Warner's impact was a healthy one. It made teachers aware of a dimension in their schoolroom that they have tended to overlook—the existence of status variations and their implications for the behavior and performance of the child. If Johnny is doing poorly, it may be a matter not of IQ, but of I.S.C. A discipline problem may only reflect the usual behavior of the "lower-lower" class. This symbolic naming may not solve the problem, but it is comforting and illuminating.

Now Warner is keenly aware of the crucial role that education plays in all societies and of the jealously guarded social democracy of the American public school. He and his associates have constantly emphasized the importance of the school as the main channel by which the bright and the enterprising of the lower classes can rise. If finding one's proper place in the hierarchy is the main solution to the problem of inequality, then the public school plays the important role of selecting and fitting individually promising young people of the lower classes for advancement. At the same time, the schools must serve to maintain the culture of the society, including its social organization. So the school in Warner's system plays a dual role: On the one hand, "it provides a general education for democratic living," and, on the other, "it trains children to fit into our class order" (W. Lloyd Warner, "Educative Effects of Social Status," *Environment and Education,* Supplementary Educational Monographs, 1942).

Warner has great faith in democracy, which consists, in his view, in individual achievement and personal aggrandizement in a relatively static, status-ordered, social universe; and he properly abhors the notion that a person should be forced to a lesser position than his endowments warrant. But this raises the question of the school's proper duty to the rest, to those who will not rise. The issue has led to a controversy between two of the sociologists who have accepted the Warner concept of class.

Allison Davis ("Child Training and Social Class," in Barker, Kounin, and Wright, *Child Behavior and Development,* 1943) points out that the schools are dominated by middle-class values, and that the lower-class child learns the habits of the classes above him, the rewards of their way of life, and the deprivations of the low status that threatens him; it is therefore proper for the school system to encourage the striving for middle-class goals on the part of the lower-class student, and it should help him to higher personal status.

Celia Stendler, in *Children of Brasstown,* attacks this time-honored tradition of school-aided social advancement. Status-striving provokes anxiety and neurosis, and it would be better if the children of "Brasstown" did not have unrealistic temptations held before them, but learned to accept their role as foundry workers and adjust to its demands.

The dilemma is certainly a difficult one. Should we ask the lower-class child to put all his hopes on his chances of social advancement, as Allison Davis proposes, risking the psychological harm that comes with failure, or should we teach him to reconcile himself to a position that is socially unsatisfying and economically unrewarding?

But perhaps this dilemma is only a creation of the Warner thesis, and there is a third way out. For the dilemma depends on Warner's assumption of the *uniformity* of the value system, that the only social satisfaction available to the individual in our society is that gained by climbing the social ladder. It thus denies the possibility that the schools might educate pupils to the recognition of values other than social advancement, and, more significantly, it ignores the possibility of making the working population aware of the dignity and value of labor, or of its unity of interests and its possibilities of increasing its economic rewards as a group. Cannot a society give some more realistic satisfaction to all its groups than the mere drugged acceptance of the lot in society to which the individual was born? Is it impossible that those who make up the major part of the unfortunately named "lower class"—that is, workers—should increase their income, their control over their fate, and the importance of their role in society, so that, *as* workers, they will not be doomed to bitterness and frustration?

If Warner's studies were merely the reports of scientists observing some segment of the universe and reporting their unhappy findings, then the question of the underlying morality could not arise. For it is a tenet of science that no fact should be avoided because it presents an unhappy reality. But Warner cannot plead this scientific immunity. Too frequently he has deserted his laboratory bench for the pulpit; his evangelism is manifest. This is not in itself a fault; in this age the scientist has searched his soul, and frequently taken his message before an agnostic public, and no one can criticize him for wishing to do so. But the evangelist, unlike the scientist, must be scrutinized both for the validity of his message and for its moral implications.

That Warner is exhorting the American public to act in terms of his class system can readily be demonstrated from one of his most recent volumes, *Social Class in America.* This book is addressed to the lay—that is, non-scientific—public. The very tone of the writing—the studied simplicity of style, the advice to skip the more turgid sections, the capitalization of each concept—these are all hallmarks. And here Warner writes: "It is the hope of the author that this book will provide a corrective instrument which will permit men and women better to evaluate their social situations and thereby better adapt themselves to social reality and fit their dreams and aspirations to what is possible."

He promises to provide "effective and simple techniques of studying and applying the social-class concept so that those who are not specialized class analysts can apply such knowledge to the practical problems of their business or profession. . . ." Again, he writes that "status plays a decisive role in the formation of personality at the various stages of development, for if young people are to learn to live adaptively as mature people in our society they must be trained by the informal controls of our society to fit into their places." He recommends the volume specifically to teachers and school administrators, to business management, sales organizations, and advertisers.

WARNER's approval of the function of soap opera in the American social system, his approach to industrial relations, his approach to the dilemma of democratic education in a class society—all this follows, not from the recognized facts of status differentiation and social variation, but from the implicit and unexamined assumption that the classes are *fixed,* in the sense that they are relatively permanent in their major outlines, and that most, though not all, persons will remain in the class to which they were born. People must "fit into their places" because Warner assumes that the places will always be there, and nothing will happen to eliminate some and add others, or to make those that are pleasant today unpleasant in the future, and vice versa. The democracy in this class system—and to me it seems a peculiar version of democracy—consists only in the opportunity for an individual, if he is sufficiently endowed, sufficiently motivated, and sufficiently lucky, to move upward. Otherwise, he had best adjust to the narrow dimensions of his social position. It is natural for those at the top to rule, it is implied, not because they necessarily have certain objective capacities, but simply because they *belong* to the "upper-upper" or "lower-upper" class.

We must distinguish between what is correct and what is questionable in this hypothesis. Differences in riches and prestige have been a characteristic of American culture since it began. That this differentiation involves considerations of wealth, family connections, and occupations, certainly cannot be denied. That people of like position associate with each other, are snobbish to those "beneath" them and deferential to those "above," is also hardly a new discovery.

It is essentially Warner's *static* concept of society—of the privileges, power, and characteristics of the different classes—that seems to me questionable. Democracy is not merely a political matrix which permits the strong to demonstrate their strength. It is an institutional system which attempts to preserve the balance between significant and divergent segments of the population, making it possible that Warner's "level of the Common Man" shall also be able to exert its proper influence in community decisions over against the powers of the "elite." In industrial affairs, it involves the protection of the worker through unionization and popular restraint upon the powers of an increasingly centralized management.

Warner limits his attention to the single end of social status and the particular means of individual action; that the group itself may have certain aims *as* a group does not occur to him—and it does not occur to him because in advance he conceives of lower-class individuals as helpless entities who are to be "fitted in" from above. Education, in Warner's analysis, serves only the status-seeking function; he cannot appreciate the direct satisfactions of education because he does not allow for values other than those which confer status. So the school system and the radio program can play no role in encouraging social solidarity and group action as means of improving the life chances of the impoverished; they can only assist the individual to rise in the status system, or, contrariwise, to adjust to the two-dimensional prison of the status ladder.

The danger of this narrow thesis lies in its popular appeal, and in the fact that it takes on the character of a pseudo-scientific ideology supporting the idea of control by the elite. As such, it may well become a force for the actual development of what it purports to have discovered: a fixed class system.

# LETTERS FROM READERS

## Judaism and Existentialism

To the Editor of Commentary:

Many a good cause is ruined by a weak argument. That is certainly true of religion. We probably would not have so many atheists, if it were not for the well-meaning but ill-arguing theologians. The current awakening of interest in Jewish theology is a welcome phenomenon, even though it has come about through the ringing of church bells. But what is not so welcome to some of us is the transfer, almost bodily, to Judaism of a pattern of thought which is native and idiomatic to Christianity.

If that pattern were self-consistent and congruous with historical fact and the laws of thought, its Christian origin would in no way militate against its transfer to Judaism. But, unfortunately, it is very far from meeting those requirements. This becomes evident when we read an article like Emil L. Fackenheim's "The Modern Jew's Path to God," which appeared in the May Commentary.

In that article, the author, who recognizes that classical Jewish theology "contains elements unacceptable to modern man and the modern Jew," undertakes to formulate a theology that would be free from those elements. His formulation is couched in Existentialist terminology, and is not easy to follow. It is bound to tax the attention of the reader all the more in the form in which I am obliged to summarize it here.

Frankly, I would not bother with this Christo-Judean theology, were it not used as a stick to beat all those who attempt to render Jewish religion compatible with the generally accepted norms of thought and belief. The author characterizes all who differ with him as guilty either of "blasphemy and intellectual dishonesty," or "hypocrisy and self-righteousness." He is not alone in resorting to vituperation as a means of "strengthening" his argument. Others of the same school of "thought" are fond of hurling the epithet "idolatrous" at those who disagree with them. If the interest in theology is not to be merely a temporary flare-up which may for a time collect around it a curious crowd of spectators who always enjoy a fight, but who are soon bored and disperse, then we must insist that the theologians stop using the "encounter with God" as a disguise for encounter with their fellow men.

Judaism, Fackenheim maintains, is not a system of ideas but "a form of religious existence." He defines that existence as "the living encounter of Israel with the God of Israel." The two distortions of Judaism, according to him, are those which represent it either "as a system of ideas" or "as little more than a useful tool for social and psychological adjustment." The basis of traditional Judaism was the certainty that God existed and that He had revealed himself to Israel. "Modern man," however, must start with man, i.e. with his striving for "self-realization," and see whether a profound self-understanding "does not lead to the point where one must take the leap into faith."

Fackenheim then proceeds to describe two attempts to reach God without "the leap into faith": that of the naturalist and that of the idealist. The naturalist recognizes the need for ultimate "integration," but only as "adjustment to environment" or "psychic health." But, contends Fackenheim, with that as an ultimate criterion, what is to prevent one from finding such "psychic health" under Nazi rule? The other version of "self-realization" is the idealist's. Fackenheim points out that it, too, is untenable, because it does not reckon with the actual evil in man's nature, and logically should lead to despair rather than to belief in God.

Classical Judaism was "a search for God—not for *religious experience* or *religious ideals*, but for an *existing* God. . . . In Jewish tradition God's existence is nowhere doubted or made dependent on objective evidence." This God is recognized by each of us when we realize the inner contradiction of human nature—both angel and animal. Such awareness of God comes when we take "the leap of faith."

Fackenheim then goes on to point out in what sense we might actually hear God speak to us or "have religious existence," as he puts it. He falls back upon Buber's identification of God as the cosmic Thou of each particular I. That accounts for "the paradoxical fact that the finite acts of man cannot and yet must make a difference to God." Through this relation to God "the rabbinic Jew finds ultimate integration." By means of Halacha "he can narrow, but not span, the gap between what ought to be and what is."

The traditional Jew, however, Fackenheim concludes, never faced the problem of modern man. "Can one choose religious existence at will? Can one decide to believe in God? Can one on one's own volition accept the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven?"

In the first place, I wish to point out that the editorial comment misleads the reader. It reads: "Is traditional Jewish thinking irrelevant to the 20th century—or does it merely seem so because of our misunderstanding of it? Emil L. Fackenheim believes the latter to be the case and here tries to substantiate it." That comment implies that those who disagree with Dr. Fackenheim regard traditional Jewish religious thinking as irrelevant to the 20th century. Is not an attempt at reinterpretation of "traditional Jewish religious thinking," such as Kaufmann Kohler's, which Fackenheim disparages, based on the assumption that "traditional Jewish religious thinking" is relevant to the 20th century? Anyone who doubts that, let him try to read Kohler's *Jewish Theology*. Likewise, Hermann Cohen, who was a neo-Kantian idealist, had no difficulty in finding traditional religious thinking relevant. The greater part of his *Die Religion der Vernunft aus der Quellen des Judentums* is a modern Midrash.

And now for Fackenheim's argument itself. It all turns upon a metaphysical or epistemological problem as to what we are to understand by "reality," whether (1) idea, (2) experience, or (3) existence. To Hermann Cohen in his *Die Religion der Vernunft*, the only reality is *idea*. All else is illusion. And he had just as devout and immediate a sense of God's existence, from his point of view, as Fackenheim and Tillich from theirs. I happen to have as immediate an *experience* of the reality of God as I have of my own personality. That does not make God any less real to me, or less of an existence, than He is to Buber or Niebuhr. In that *experience* I am both as certain and as uncertain that it is God that I hear as they are concerning their own experience. After all, Plato and Berkeley and Hegel and Royce were no chimney sweeps, and knew a thing or two, even if they disagree with Kierkegaard and Sartre. They happened to believe that ultimate reality was *idea*. Neither can we dismiss James, Peirce, Dewey, and to a large extent Whitehead, as of no account even if they did regard *experience* as the only revealer of reality. What special supernatural revelation have the Existentialist theologians been vouchsafed that entitles them to claim that only their version of reality is the true one?

There are styles in philosophy as there are styles in clothes. This current preference for the term "existence" to the term "experience" is only due to the fact that the term "experience" has come to be a well-worn cliché which fails to convey the feel of all that the term originally conveyed. The very term "leap of faith," for example, shows how we are often driven to create new terms for old ideas. For actually what is faith itself if not a mental leap? To speak of a leap of faith is tantamount to speaking of "a leap of a leap." Philosophically, Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* is an elaboration of the meaning of faith. A leap into practical reason would make more sense than "a leap into faith."

For Fackenheim to read out of, or into, Scriptural and rabbinic passages meanings that belong to his style of philosophy (not religion) is a legitimate procedure. That may be good or bad homiletics, but it proves nothing. He uses, for example, a text from Job to prove that in Biblical Judaism the certainty of God's existence was not questioned. The text he gives is the well-known one from the King James version: "Even though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The original Hebrew, however, is obscure. In fact the *ketib* or "written" text says the opposite. Or take the rabbinic text which he quotes in *support* of his theory; actually it *refutes* his theory. The text reads as follows: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and I am God. That is, when ye are My witnesses, I am God, and when ye are not My witnesses, I am, as it were, not God." If it means anything, it means that the very godhood of God depends upon men's *belief* in Him. Could any statement more plainly contradict the entire point of the article?

According to Fackenheim, "nowhere is God's existence doubted or made dependent on objective evidence." If that is true, how does he account for a statement like the one in Deuteronomy which points out that no other people actually heard "God's voice speaking from the midst of the fire," or witnessed such miracles as those which it *saw with its own eyes* when it left Egypt. And it then adds: "Thou hast been shown all this that thou mightest know that YHWH alone is God." The truth is that in all this neo-orthodox Christian-Jewish, or so-called realistic, theology, no attempt is made to reckon with the facts that have been learned from the actual observation of the way religion has functioned in the lives of men and nations. The existence of superhuman powers endowed with man-like wills and purposes was an assumption by no means confined to any one people. Even the highly sophisticated Epicureans believed in the existence of gods. What they denied was the *intervention* of the gods in the affairs of man. What mattered was not the *existence* of a god, but his *power,* and his *use* of that power to help his people. These did require objective proof.

Our ancestors were no exception in having to be given evidence. Elijah had to demonstrate that YHWH was a real god and not Baal by having his prayer for a sign answered. Isaiah rebukes Ahaz for not asking objective proof of YHWH's power to save Jerusalem from the kings who besieged it. To read the Bible as Fackenheim does is to misunderstand it from beginning to end.

From the introduction to his article it is evident that Fackenheim believes that his theology is the only one that can "provide a *religious* reason why a Jew should continue to be a Jew —why Judaism ought to survive." On the other hand, it is equally evident that Fackenheim does not believe in the historicity of the miracles which the Bible gives as objective proof of God's power and of his concern for the Jewish people. The religious rationale which Fackenheim suggests, no doubt, has validity for him. But so long as he cannot claim that rationale to be God's revelation to him, he is hardly in a position to claim for it the exclusive validity that he does.

If Fackenheim would believe that the miracles and the theophany actually occurred, he would not have to look to Existentialism as a rationale for Jewish religion. Judah Halevi was much more to the point when he maintained that, with all those miracles as historic fact, all philosophical arguments are superfluous. Existentialism is no less philosophical than naturalism or idealism.

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## Dr. Fackenheim Replies

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dr. Kaplan's argument is vitiated by his failure to distinguish sharply between immediate religious experience and the philosophical and theological interpretation which attempts to validate it.

1. It would indeed be an intolerable presumption were I to cast aspersions on the genuineness of another man's religious experience. Religious experience is immediate, and hence is a matter between the individual and God. I am not only entitled, however, I am even obliged to argue against what may seem to me a false interpretation of it. Throughout his letter, Dr. Kaplan accuses me of doing the former, whereas I am doing the latter. Surely it is possible for one man to say to another: "The integrity of your religious life compels my admiration; but my theology is correct because it is in accord with fact and logic, and because it is able to preserve the authenticity and irreducibility of the religious experience, whereas your theology falls short in some of these respects; hence your interpretation of your own faith is incorrect." Dr. Kaplan argues against the truth of my interpretation of the God-man relation from the fact that many sincere religious thinkers offered different interpretations; this is a clear *non sequitur.*

2. A thinker of Dr. Kaplan's stature is hardly likely to commit such an error without some cause. I seem to find such a cause in his use of the word "rationale." Theological interpretations, it appears, are to him something like a lawyer's case, i.e., props which may psychologically reinforce convictions and experiences, but which do nothing to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Since convictions and experiences differ, so, then, do the "rationales" which support them. No theology can refute another, and they must all try to reside peacefully side by side. So deep is Dr. Kaplan's skepticism as to the ability of theological reasoning to achieve truth, that he demands a "special supernatural revelation" for those who would maintain the truth of a theological doctrine.

If this is indeed Dr. Kaplan's view, I am in complete disagreement with it. Theology, to be sure, is no substitute for faith. It may not lead us to God—but it can lead us to truths about man's situation in his world, and it can help us to distinguish between true and false religious belief. Like philosophy, it is either concerned with truth and falsehood, or it rules itself out of existence. Surely it is possible to find a "rationale" for the most arbitrary feelings and desires. We must be able to distinguish between mere "rationales" and rational truths. In my article, I tried to rest my case on reasoning—good or bad. I wish Dr. Kaplan had tried to refute it, instead of attacking the ability of reason to reach theological truths—and thus to expose theological errors.

3. I do not yield to Dr. Kaplan in my admiration of Plato and the other thinkers he cites. But it is impossible to hold a doctrine true without implying the falsity of doctrines contradicting it. Plato, I am sure, would rather have us seek truth as he did, and disagree with him as to its nature, than place him, along with all thinkers, into a sort of pantheon where no theory is true because all are to be so. It was Plato's master who said: "Do not think of Socrates; think of the truth."

4. Perhaps Dr. Kaplan's most serious specific charge is that of "Christianizing." What I

have argued is that man is a finite creature, inherently incomplete and thus in need of a supernatural God. Could anything be more familiar to Jewish tradition than this viewpoint, implied in the doctrines of creation, revelation, and Messianic redemption? How, then, can one account for Dr. Kaplan's accusation?

THE answer is obvious. Since the 19th century, man's unqualified freedom to redeem himself has been regarded as the sole alternative to the Christian doctrine of original sin; and man's independence of a supernatural God and his capacity for unlimited progress were put forward as *the* genuine Jewish doctrines. In truth, however, it is one thing to reject, on Jewish grounds, the doctrine of original sin, but quite another to reject that of man's dependence on a supernatural God; the latter rejection is inspired, not by Jewish sources, but by the secularistic philosophy of the Enlightenment.

Some of us have come to doubt the substitutes for a supernatural God offered by the Enlightenment, and have turned back, searchingly, to our Jewish tradition. It is a fact not lacking irony that such attempts should be branded as un-Jewish on intellectual grounds that are not at all those of Jewish tradition, but which are derived from modern secularism.

5. There is no need to go at length into matters of exegesis. (I might mention, though, that I followed the Jewish Publication Society's version in the rendition of the Job passage.) As Dr. Kaplan says, isolated passages in themselves prove nothing. Only two points here require comment.

How Dr. Kaplan could have failed thoroughly to grasp my meaning in connection with the rabbinic passage to which he refers, I am at a loss to understand. I quoted the text to illustrate, not man's total and unqualified impotence before God, but "the paradoxical fact that the finite acts of finite men cannot, *and yet must,* make a difference to the infinite God." The text itself asserts the absolute importance of human action, the phrase "as it were" expresses the religious paradox this fact entails.

That the Bible regards God's existence as beyond proof seems agreed between Dr. Kaplan and myself. It is His power, says Dr. Kaplan, not His existence, which matters; and, he goes on to say, this *does* require objective proof. I wholly agree with him except for one point which makes all the difference. Are we to use the phrase "objective proof" here, in a religious context, in the very same sense as in a philosophic or scientific or theological context? How "objective" is such proof really? Is not what the believer regards as the "objective" manifestation of God's very presence, to the unbeliever a mere thornbush, burning as a result of some chemical reaction? It is precisely because of the different notions of "objectivity" in religion and science that I spoke of the need for a "leap into faith."

EMIL L. FACKENHEIM

Department of Philosophy
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## Roosevelt and Smith

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I should like to correct a factual error in my review of Judge Proskauer's *A Segment of My Times* (June COMMENTARY). I stated in the review that it was at a conference at Hyde Park, attended by Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Herbert Swope, and Judge Proskauer, that Roosevelt arrived at the decision to accept the gubernatorial nomination.

A conference was held, but it was held in 1924, and its purpose was to discuss the central theme of Roosevelt's "Happy Warrior" speech, by which he put Alfred E. Smith in nomination for the presidency.

My only explanation is that I found the chapters on Smith and Roosevelt so fascinating that I stopped making notes and, in writing, was unaware of the error.

ISRAEL KNOX

Ohio University
Athens, Ohio

## From Backstage

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I thought Alfred Kazin's article about the Broadway audience ["We Who Sit in Darkness," in the June COMMENTARY] was fascinating and I am sending it to my colleagues on *South Pacific*. Allow me to congratulate Mr. Kazin on a brilliant job. It should be a great help to all of us in the theater to read this sensitive analysis of our present-day audience.

JOSHUA LOGAN

New York City

# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## Pins and Needles, Sweat and Tears

JEWISH LABOR IN THE USA: 1882-1914. By MELECH EPSTEIN. Published by the Trade Union Sponsoring Committee. 22-24 West 38th Street, New York. 456 pages. $5.50.

*Reviewed by* DANIEL BELL

WHEN I was fifteen and already destined to be a scribe, the first post I held in our "family circle" was that of "historian," thus perhaps becoming one of those minor official historians and biographers whose work makes up such a large part of our contemporary Jewish literature. Although practiced quite extensively, official history seems to be—if measured by the voluminous records of *landsmanshaften, vereinen,* and other forms of communal life—a particularly Jewish vice. After all, the continual straining for *yichus* ("pedigree") has been a characteristic effort of synagogues, philanthropies, defense organizations, and other communal groups, and "A History" is a means of certifying a recently acquired status.

Recently, the blight has settled on the Jewish labor movement. In many American unions, an official who has achieved the eminence of a statesman is usually presented with a car, or a house, or an annuity, or some similar slight token of respect; in the Jewish labor movement, his confreres commission a "biography." The biography may be a sign of rising *parvenu* aspirations; it may equally be an earnest, if maudlin, effort to recall the early idealism that marked the bitter struggles against the degrading exploitation of the sweatshop. Whatever the motives, though, one fears that in these uncritical compilations a wonderful source of materials for Jewish history will be overlaid with a varnish so heavy that when it is finally rubbed away no usable surface will remain.

IN THIS flood of inadequate writing about the Jewish labor movement, it is a pleasure to come across a book of distinct value. Melech Epstein's history of Jewish labor in the United States, despite its official sponsorship, is not an official history. It is an honest attempt to write the first general history of Jewish labor in English. Epstein is too responsible a writer, and has suffered too much in being faithful to his own ideas, to turn out, in his older years, the hack work that so often passes for history or biography. Yet such are the economics of Jewish writing that he has been forced to tread warily. The result is an uneven book. The initial sections on the European background, the bewildered reactions of the immigrant to the American scene, the early failures at organizing unions, are clean and sure. The industrial history and occupational analyses are scholarly and sound. The chapters on the emergence of an East Side culture ("in no other labor movement, at any period, has poetry been such a potent force; this was the peculiar experience of Jewish labor") have an authentic pathos.

The later sections on politics, however, miss fire. Here history becomes mere chronicle and the swift flow of narrative is hobbled by an endless roll call of minor ancestors. No character assessment is made of the leading union protagonists—such as Hillquit, Barondess, Dyche, and Schlesinger (though these might have been held over for a prospective second volume). Controversial figures such as Abraham Cahan, the great Pooh-Bah of Yiddish radical and cultural life, are handled gingerly.

The five mass strikes from 1910 to 1914, the "great revolt" which for the first time solidly established the Jewish unions, are compressed into thirty-four pages and treated quite sketchily. Consequently, any adequate sociology of the movement is difficult: one is unable to discern, for example, why the Jewish unions succeeded only after 1910, why a stable leadership was so late in developing, and similar matters.

THESE cavils should not detract from the solid achievements of the book—especially noticeable, its "feel" for organized Jewish working-class life in America. Perhaps the distinctive character of Jewish communal experience throughout our long wanderings has been its intensity. The Russian Pale, from which the Yiddish-speaking world of New York was drawn, was a walled island whose people lived in coiled anxiety against the moment when the wall would be breached. New York was for the immigrants from the Pale a nervous release of tension. Its quick and staccato growth expanded enormously the opportunities for each character-type to develop its suppressed potential. But in so doing, it set up such violent and extreme distances from top to bottom that the bonds of community became strained. The *grober yung* ("young boor") developed into the sweatshop boss, the *yeshiva bocher* (Talmud student) into the utopian intellectual, the *luftmensh* into the real estate speculator, the *shlemiel* into the political hack, the rabbi into the municipal reformer, and the vast masses, the *nebichs* ("poor fish"), were ground into the maw of an exploitative small-unit garment economy.

The men who shaped the spirit of Jewish labor and fired the hopes of the dispossessed were the radical intelligentsia. Yet how removed they were from reality! They preached a messianism in comparison with which the immigrant dreams of a "golden land" paled. Where else could one find a utopian movement like the influential Am Haolom of the 1890's? Its members, starting out from Russia, marched across Europe with a Torah in one hand and a copy of *Das Kapital* in the other, in the hope of setting up cooperative agricultural colonies in the United States, and finally succeeded in reaching the Pacific where they set up a short-lived settlement in Oregon named New Odessa. Even when the equality of the kibbutz was replaced by the leveling of the tenement, the air of unreality remained. In place of colonization came the political dreams of anarchism and socialism; these were never defined as concrete goals but as far-away Edens toward which we would be moved by immanent historical processes. Unfortunately, however, each group was certain that its analysis was the historically correct one. Throughout the 1890's and the first decade of the century, as fierce a rivalry raged among the political intelligentsia as ever prevailed among warring Christian sects. And this corrosive factionalism, probably more than any other factor, was responsible for the continual failure of attempts to establish trade unions.

All of this changed, however, after 1904, when the second heavy wave of immigration began. In the short space of six years more than six hundred thousand immigrants poured into the country, settling largely in New York and providing a tremendous pool of cheap "greenhorn" labor for the rapidly expanding garment industry. A good proportion of this newer immigration, however, were younger men and women who possessed an emotional fire that had been stoked by the rising socialist and Zionist movements. Many were well educated, and, finding no outlet, went into the shops where they soon became part of a new union leadership. By 1914 the social structure of the Jewish community had been revamped: the unions had become a powerful movement in Jewish life; large fraternal working-class bodies such as the Workmen's Circle were established; socialism had won the majority of the Jewish masses.

A VARIETY of impulses had fused to assure this great upsurge. One was the youthfulness of the new leadership of the movement, a second the idealistic ardor instilled by Socialist Bundism and Zionism, and a third that one-man institution, the *Jewish Daily Forward,* and its stormy editor Abraham Cahan.

The *Forward* made its unique mark in American Jewish life because it was a Yiddish press among a Yiddish folk. The early intellectuals had become separated from the Yiddish masses by their disdainful refusal to speak or use Yiddish. The *Forward* mirrored and articulated the pathos and deep self-pity, the despair and indignation of a bewildered immigrant folk. Characteristically, the *Forward* won its first popular support and ousted its dominant rival, the Socialist Labor party's *Abendblatt,* when on two crucial issues it took an undogmatic and even "anti-socialist" stand. The *Abendblatt* attacked the Spanish-American war, and along with other doctrinaire socialist papers refused to be roused by the Dreyfus case. But hatred of Spain was deep in Jewish consciousness, and Dreyfus himself was a Jew. On both issues the feelings of the Jewish masses were aroused and the *Forward* followed in their wake.

Probably in few other instances has a press had so great a cultural influence on a community. In effect, the *Forward* replaced the rabbi, although synagogue modes of discourse were adopted. Propaganda was carried on by *Di Proletarisher Magid* (the "Proletarian Preacher") and the lessons were called the *Red Sedra* (the *sedra* is the weekly reading from the Torah). The first walking delegate, said the

*Forward,* was Moses, because he led the strike against the Egyptian overseers.

The waistmakers' strike of 1909, which set off the great series of organizing strikes that made the Jewish labor movement, was precipitated by an emotional outburst of a young female dressmaker which swept the entire audience at a union mass meeting. Yet what Epstein, himself a romantic, tends to slight, is the fact that while romanticism gave spark to the "great revolt," it was only by "becoming practical" that these labor institutions survived. The *Forward* grew only because it was independent of party control, and the unions took firm root only after, as in the general American experience, their own ends were divorced from the utopian demands of the socialist political parties. In short, one could not, as the revolutionary socialist demanded, live in the world but not of it. The acceptance by the ILGWU in 1910 of the Protocol of Peace, which set up a permanent arbitration machinery in the industry, meant the recognition by the union of the hard fact that one lived in the here-and-now with the employers and that one had to accept the industry's problems as defined by the market. In that situation lay the seeds of tension which were to agonize a whole generation of union firebrands whose tendency, as one of them has put it, was to talk revolutionary and act conservative.

Yet the problem was also more than a question of class struggle. If these were Jewish unions, they also dealt with the Jewish employers, and the fact of the common denominator could not be evaded. It was equally, of course, a problem for the Jewish capitalists, and particularly the "Yahudim" (rich "assimilated" Jews). When the Am Haolom wended its way across Europe, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, fearing the unfavorable impression that might be created by so motley and tattered a horde, gave the movement money in order to push it on. And when in the 1880's the intellectuals formed the Jewish Workers' Verein to help organize Jewish workers into unions, the *American Hebrew* declared, "We are Jews only in the synagogue." But when the large masses of Jewish workers in a Jewish industry became too strong either to be ignored or bought off, the wealthy Jews were forced to intervene and seek peace. Thus when the great strikes of 1910 opened the fetid sweatshops to an astounded middle-class gaze, Jacob Schiff and Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee utilized their influence on the garment manufacturers and prevailed upon them to adopt a more conciliatory attitude. As Epstein wryly points out: "Demands that the Schiffs would have opposed in industries in which they were interested, they were ready to have the cloak industry accept." Thus, in one sense, the powerful Jewish unions became established under the patronage of large Jewish wealth.

In the last issue of its annual, YIVO (Yiddish Scientific Institute) conducted a discussion on the lack of Jewish social research in the United States. YIVO itself has produced a large volume in Yiddish on the history of Jewish labor in the United States. Epstein's book goes a long way toward filling the need for an English volume. He is now working on a second volume, bringing the story up to date. It is a more difficult story. Sacrifice and sentimentality were cast off with the youthful years. The author now faces the record of adaptation, compromise, opportunism, Americanization, and the thorny problem of the evaluation of the actions of various individuals. We can hope the final picture will be accurate and unadorned, warts and all.

## Beyond Liberalism

The Liberal Imagination. By Lionel Trilling. Viking. 303 pp. $3.50.

*Reviewed by* Stephen Spender

This is a difficult book to review. The difficulty is that Mr. Trilling has a single theme—a critical examination of the influence of liberal ideas on contemporary literature—but this theme is too often not at the center of his book. Indeed, at moments one almost suspects that he discovered his theme after he had finished it. *The Liberal Imagination* consists of writings suited to occasions; lectures delivered, papers read, essays, prefaces, and so on. All these are certainly worth collecting into a volume. But the book falls rather between two stools of being a miscellaneous collection and being a series of connected essays to illustrate one thesis.

In an earlier review which I have destroyed, I allowed myself to be too easily distracted by trailing several of Mr. Trilling's opinions which —important as they are—remain outside his main argument. For example, his view—extravagant to my mind—that *The Princess Casamassima* can be grouped with the great realist novels

*EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS OF VOLUMES 1 AND 2*

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of the 19th century: *Le Rouge et le Noir, Le Père Goriot, Great Expectations,* and *L'Education Sentimentale.* But—I protested—is it conceivable that if Balzac or Flaubert had been writing in English a novel of London low political life, he would have called his hero "Hyacinth"? All Mr. Trilling's demonstrations that the kind of fantastic plotting in which James involves his characters is feasible because such things did happen at the time in St. Petersburg, Dublin, and Paris, do not convince me that *The Princess Casamassima* is a Londonish novel: and that is what has to be proved.

The foregoing remarks will illustrate how easy it is to be led away from the subject of Mr. Trilling's book into a discussion of his critical views. So now I shall resolutely direct my attention to the main subject, which gives the title to this book: *The Liberal Imagination.*

MR. TRILLING thinks the liberal imagination defective, and it is scarcely too much to say that his book might well be entitled "The Liberal Lack of Imagination." What it amounts to is that liberals are inclined to—or do—live within a spiritual orthodoxy of belief in progress and support of humanitarian causes, which is based on their having a generalized view of humanity as a whole and neglecting to examine closely the nature of the individual human heart. Thus the situation arises that the liberal creative writers, with their diffused social vision, have not had the profoundest things to say about people, and are in fact not the best writers: despite the generally accepted liberalism of our educated society, the best writers are men with illiberal views.

It is necessary here to quote rather extensively from Mr. Trilling's analysis of the situation, in order to discuss it without the risk of distortion. One reason for quoting is that Mr. Trilling makes assertions about liberalism in the United States which could not possibly be made about it in Europe; and as a European it is necessary for me to keep this distinction before me; it is very evident in the following:

"In the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition. For it is the plain fact that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation. This does not mean, of course, that there is no impulse to conservatism or to reaction. Such impulses are certainly very strong, perhaps even stronger than most of us know. But the conservative impulse and the reactionary impulse do not, with some isolated and some ecclesiastical exceptions, express themselves in ideas but only in action or in irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas."

The above paragraph is very puzzling to a European like myself, firstly because, from three thousand miles away, America often appears the most conservative country in the world. However, it is quite possible that America could be conservative and all the writers liberals—though I am left wondering whether Allen Tate, William Faulkner, and a few others can be described as such, and if they are not, whether their conservatism can be dismissed as a gesture. But my second reason for being amazed is that European intellectual life without "conservative or reactionary ideas" seems almost unthinkable. For instance, a great part of the genius of modern French literature is profoundly conservative and even reactionary. And in England, a conservative movement, led by the ex-American T. S. Eliot, and certainly including writers like Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, has a wide influence.

In fact, I can only consider a liberal orthodoxy in relation to a conservative one. To me, liberalism is the belief in the improvability, if not the perfectibility, of man: conservatism (from a literary point of view at all events—politicians we need not discuss, because they have long ceased to know what political principles are about) is the belief that individual man cannot be improved, therefore he must be disciplined and must exist in a hierarchy which owes much to a tradition based on an understanding of the unchanging qualities of human nature; though the order of the hierarchy and the conditions it imposes may be adjusted in order to alleviate men's circumstances.

So, fundamentally, the conservative-liberal controversy is a debate about the nature of man. And curiously enough this kind of political thinking exists far more deeply today in our intellectual life than in politics itself, where divisions of interest have more and more superseded divisions of philosophy.

The difficulty of Mr. Trilling's position—which appears to be that, being an American intellectual, he simply cannot believe that a conservative intellectual life exists—is that he still has to explain why the best writers in our time are not ideologically liberals, and why the liberal critics are so sentimental as to regard Theodore Dreiser as a realist and the world of

Henry James as quite unreal. The great and enormous virtue of Mr. Trilling is that he is extremely honest and he sees all the liberal failings very clearly. Faced, though, by the illiberalism of the best modern writers, he simply shrugs off their conservatism as though it were accidental, and uses their creative achievement as a critical weapon against the liberals:

"If . . . we name those writers who . . . are to be thought of as the monumental figures of our time, we see that to these writers the liberal ideology has at best been a matter of indifference. Proust, Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot, Yeats, Mann (in his creative work), Kafka, Rilke, Gide [why Gide?—S.S.]—all have their own love of justice and the good life, but in not one of them does it take the form of a love of the ideas which liberal democracy, as known by our educated class, has declared respectable. So that we can say that no connection exists between our liberal educated class and the best of the literary minds of our time. [But it is fallacious to argue that because the best writers are not liberals therefore the liberals have no connection with their work.—S.S.] The same fatal separation is to be seen in the tendency of our educated liberal class to reject the tough, complex psychology of Freud for the easy, rationalistic optimism of Horney and Fromm." [But surely if ever there was a liberal it was Freud himself, and by the argument which Mr. Trilling himself has just used, this would seem to show that there is a connection between the liberals and the liberal Freud.—S.S.]

My inserted remarks demonstrate how difficult it is to review Mr. Trilling without being led astray by the red herrings of his generalizations. Generalization, of course, is not necessarily wrong, or "fatal" as Mr. Trilling would probably call it. It is a method of argument, but a peculiarly disconcerting one if misused: and I think that Mr. Trilling's generalizations (like the one about there being no American conservative intellectual life—which I really am beginning to doubt at this stage of my review) make his main argument into a kind of obstacle race in which one is continually being tripped up by some extremely dubious statement.

However, I agree with the general drift of the paragraph I have quoted, even though the drift is far too general. Mr. Trilling defends the writers he has cited for their seriousness, and accepts their position as critics of a too easygoing liberalism. But he does not inquire what that orthodoxy is which all these writers share, and which is absent from the liberal intellectuals. I suggest that it is belief in original sin. Leaving Gide out of it (I don't know why Mr. Trilling ever put him in), what Proust, Joyce, Kafka, Rilke, Eliot, Yeats, and perhaps even Lawrence have in common, is an underlying conviction that man has fallen, and that each individual human being has inherited a burden of guilt which extends far beyond himself and for which nevertheless he must in some way atone in order that he may be redeemed.

I DO not have to inquire into the theological implications of such a view in order to pose what I think is the central question of a debate between the liberal and the "traditionalist conservative" views. It is: does the view that man is fallen and innately sinful give us a deeper insight into the individual human heart than the one that he is a creature whose bad qualities are entirely the result of his environment, so that individual man improves in a ratio proportionate to the improvement of social conditions?

Now the opposition of these points of view confronts us with the discomforting paradox which explains, among other things, the defection of many writers, during the past century, from a youthful liberalism to a middle-aged conservatism. The paradox is that the views which politically are most useful to humanity may give us a too optimistic picture of individual man: whereas those which tell us the most important truth about the human heart—that it is indeed black—encourage reactionary and even tyrannical politics. Writers shift from liberalism to conservatism because it is more important to them in their work to have an exact picture of the nature of individuals than to have vaguely beneficial views about the whole of society.

Both conservative and liberal views if they are developed in isolation from one another are false, and, if pushed to extremes, reveal their falsity. Contemporary politics does push things to extremes, and we get the extreme of one aspect of the liberal view in Communism; and the extreme of cynicism about human nature in fascism. The Communist argument (economic liberty under political dictatorship) is that given good conditions, human nature will improve, therefore the men who are committed to introducing good conditions (i.e. the members of the Party) can use whatever methods an abstract necessity dictates. This leaves out of account the fact that the men who direct the Communist society are bad and fallen like all men, and are motivated not just by objective history, but by self-interest, vanity, and lust for power. The fascists start from the opposite point of view that all men are bad and therefore must be dictated to by a reactionary traditionalist elite.

What democracy really requires is a synthesis of that which is true in conservatism and that which is true in liberalism. Liberalism should be tested by the capacity of liberals to combine their programs for improvement with a realistic view of the qualities of human individuals; conservatism should be tested by the determination of those who believe in original sin to improve man's environment nonetheless. In effect, the conservative-liberal opposition should wither away in a living democracy and be superseded by a kind of revolutionary traditionalism; that is to say, a determination to improve conditions, inseparably fused with a determination that the most valuable characteristics of tradition should be reborn within the future.

THIS brings me back to *The Liberal Imagination*. Mr. Trilling has stated two or three of the positions which most need stating in this book. He has analyzed with great authority the relationship of literature to the deepest political currents of a country and an age. He puts his finger on the weaknesses of the liberal orthodoxy, and he has indicated the self-criticism of which the progressive thinkers stand in need: "A criticism which has at heart the interests of liberalism might find its most useful work not in confirming liberalism in its general sense of rightness but rather in putting under some degree of pressure the liberal ideas and assumptions of the present time. If liberalism is, as I believe it to be, a large tendency rather than a concise body of doctrine, then, as that large tendency makes itself explicit, certain of its particular expressions are bound to be relatively weaker than others, and some even useless and mistaken."

He might be criticized for analyzing the symptoms of liberal weaknesses rather than searching for the root of the disease. He accepts perhaps too easily the Goethean view that "there is no such thing as a liberal idea, only liberal sentiments." The test of sentiments today lies in action: and action seems to be above all what is required of American liberals. For liberals, action may mean giving up a great deal, if not all, in order to save the soul of the world: and it is this kind of action which the vague liberal benevolence seems disinclined to undertake. But perhaps to have considered this would have led Mr. Trilling too far into politics. What seems the most serious defect in his book is his quite remarkable unawareness of any points of view which seriously challenge liberalism. The kind of discussion which is to be found in the remarkable correspondence between the socialist-minded J. B. Yeats and his son, the poet W. B. Yeats, does not exist here. Yet surely there are not just liberal writers and those who are not liberal through some kind of deficiency which nevertheless enables them to write better than the liberals? There is a serious anti-liberal ideology which has produced the best literature of our time, and this is the real challenge to liberal intellectuals. It is a pity that Mr. Trilling can find nothing to take seriously in the conservatism of W. H. Auden, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Allen Tate, Robert Lowell, Peter Viereck, and others—considered, that is, as conservatism, and not just as lack of liberal ideology.

## The Brother and the Other

THE IDEA OF USURY: FROM TRIBAL BROTHERHOOD TO UNIVERSAL OTHERHOOD. By BENJAMIN N. NELSON. Princeton University Press.* 258 pp. $3.00.

*Reviewed by* KARL POLANYI

UNDER this suggestive title, we are offered a penetrating work in the history of ideas. Before we are half through with this account of the adventures in the Western world of the prohibition in Deuteronomy against the taking of usury by Jew from Jew, but not from a non-Jew, we cannot fail to realize that what is probably the longest debate of world literature revolved not so much around the mere idea of usury as about the relation of Jew and Gentile. To the thoughtful reader of Mr. Nelson's study, the usury dispute appears less an aspect of economic history (to which the author in scholarly self-denial confines it) than a symptom of a hidden weakness of Western civilization: the relation of the Old to the New Testament. It was *only* in the Jewish-Christian tradition that the question of usury achieved a moral-theological dignity. Why this should have been so, emerges very clearly when Mr. Nelson's data are considered in a wider framework.

Usury is, of course, an obsolete term for interest. But what once was a major source of income has become in our days a dwindling addition to capital—and what was once considered nefarious has become an indispensable tool of a market economy; and even the Russian planners would feel hampered if they had to go without it. When John Maynard Keynes in the 20's raised doubts concerning the efficacy of the bank rate of interest as a regulator of the economic life of the planet, he had to suffer the reprobation which is the lot of those who lay hand to the root of ordered human existence. It then appeared that we had come to think of interest as one of the foundations on which civilization itself rested. To replace it by some newfangled banking techniques seemed as sacrilegious as to rely for propagation of the race on artificial insemination.

So it needs an effort to recall that for at least a thousand years Jewish-Christian civilization had been subject to recurrent outbreaks of conflict over usury, and that it was hardly more than four centuries ago that Calvin started the new dispensation under which the taking of interest was finally removed from the threat of excommunication. It is the merit of Mr. Nelson's book to show how Calvin's act symbolized a veritable change of the emotional and intellectual climate in which Western man lived. The closeness of feudal-tribal existence had passed forever and the wider but chillier skies of universal humanity were preparing to receive him. The medieval church, which had battled for the maintenance of the taboo against usury throughout Christendom, had suffered final defeat. It made its peace with capitalism, whose lifeblood was profit; the new economic order created a sufficiency of wealth, which made society immune against the dangers of usury. The idea of interest thus lost its horrors for a society which was maturing towards the tepid serenities of a non-sectarian prosperity.

Benjamin Nelson has placed the problem for the first time in its proper context. His "Brotherhood" versus "Otherhood" is a revival of Maine's "Status" versus "Contractus," later reformulated by Toennies as "Community" versus "Society." These are also the poles between which Max Weber's sociology oscillated. The condemnation of usury as a breach of community was born in Hebrew tribal surroundings, and every time the tribal spirit was reembodied in Mediterranean lands the same violent hostility against the taking of interest reemerged. Seven hundred years after the promulgation of the Deuteronomic prohibition the early Christians resuscitated the ban on usury; and another thousand years later, the advent of the Germanic tribes recreated the pristine climate of anti-commercialism.

Mr. Nelson's *Idea of Usury,* for all its pellucid scholarly remoteness, has truly dramatic implications for the relation of Jew and Gentile. Not for nothing does his account reach its literary climax in the figure of Martin Luther, whose conscience was torn, during the peasant revolts, between the Christian universalization of the Jewish tribal taboo against usury and the fear of weakening the forces of law and order with which he had sided. Luther was caught on both horns of the dilemma: he had to recognize the moral superiority of the Jewish taboo on interest, while yet rejecting its application for fear of its worldly consequences.

For a student of the sociology of economic institutions, the idea of usury as it percolated through the Western world bears the imprint of the Jewish-Christian calvary. In numerous other countries of the past, usury either posed no problem or, if it did, a variety of solutions proved equally acceptable. Solon abolished debt bondage in Greece, but the sources almost fail to mention usury. In Rome, the XII Tables ordered the defaulting debtor to be sold into slavery, yet Cato the Elder was convinced that the XII Tables had prohibited the taking of interest for all times. The Kwakiutl Indians regarded veritable orgies of usury as a national sport, while the Bunyan sect of India, whose members would refuse to eat fruit for fear of unwittingly harming a maggot, were notorious for their practice of hounding the victims of their usurious dealings to death. In effect, Jewish-Christian civilization is the only civilization known to us in which the taking of interest became a problem.

And what a problem! What a moral and spiritual rack on which Jew and Christian were stretched! The New Testament was grafted on the Old. It was invalid without it. The son of God was the offspring of a Jewish woman. And the spirit of the new religion (as the Jew, too, recognized) was an offspring of Jewish prophetic teaching. And yet the Jews had to reject their son, whose alleged claim to be the Messiah might have spelled their doom as a people. The New Testament had repeated the injunction: "Take no interest on loans." In this, too, Jesus was fulfilling the Mosaic law. But that law enjoined the Jew to refrain from usury only towards his brother Jew, not also towards the Gentile. The outcome was a combination of Old and New Testaments fraught with peril, a veritable symbiosis of death. This, and this alone, explains the enormous exaggerations of the role played by Jewish usury in the Middle Ages, as well as the bitterness of the hatred generated by this monstrous situation. The Gentile could never confess to himself his envy of the Jew who had evaded the cross of a supererogatory ethic, while the Jew must have been conscious of the *privilegium odiosum* conferred on him by the restriction of the Deuteronomic injunction to his own kind.

Mr. Nelson vividly depicts the Protestant dilemma which involved identification with the Old Testament laws in its emphasis on social justice, while at the same time the universalist postulate of Christianity drove the Reformation towards an ever sharper rejection of tribal seclusionism. The result was universalism—with a vengeance. Instead of the universal extension of the prohibition of usury, it was the abolishment of this prohibition that was universalized. Jew and Gentile gave way to Economic Man—who, in turn, in a bath of blood, became once again Jew and Gentile. *The Idea of Usury,* which seems to recount only the story of two verses of Deuteronomy dealing with economic matters, is nothing less than a guide to the *Divina Commedia* of Jew and Gentile.

## Pacifists in Prison

PRISON ETIQUETTE: The Convict's Compendium of Useful Information. By The Inmates. Edited with an introduction by Holley Cantine and Dachine Rainer. Preface by Christopher Isherwood. Retort Press, Bearsville, New York. 138 pp. $2.50.

*Reviewed by* WILL HERBERG

THIS is a noteworthy book. It is a collection of articles, memoirs, stories, drawings, and poems dealing with their prison experience by some fourteen conscientious objectors who for one reason or another could not or were not permitted to take advantage of the exemption and alternative service offered under the law. What they have to say is of first importance to everyone concerned with the fate of the "idealist" in organized society, and they say it with such precision, with such utter lack of sentimentality or self-pity, and on the whole with such fairness, that their accounts carry conviction beyond mere factual reliability. With but few exceptions, the writing is clear and forceful, and the typography—the book was hand set and printed by the editors—is quite superior.

What emerges from this testimony? The over-all impression seems to be both of the essential inhumanity of imprisonment as such, and of the relative humaneness of American penology, at least insofar as the CO's experienced it. "The existing prison system in the United States," the editors grant, "is, in many ways, the most thoroughly reformed in the world," and they note the "considerable improvement in the material conditions in American prisons in the interval between the First and Second World Wars." Most of the contributors also bear witness to this fact; indeed, some of them are perceptive enough to see that prison may prove a more dreadful thing to the guard who is tied to it by his profession than to the prisoner whom the passing of every day and hour brings that much closer to his release. "Time is on the side of the prisoner. . . . A few minutes gone is a few minutes towards freedom for the inmate. . . . But to the jailers time is an enemy. They are getting no younger and they do not like this job and are afraid to quit and seek employment elsewhere. They see the inmate walk leadenly into camp and leave on innocent wings. . . . They, alas, must stay behind year after year, imprisoned by life or by their own fear of insecurity. . . ." (Curtis Zahn).

But lest we take comfort from the relative humaneness of American prison conditions and begin to think of prison as a "good thing" for the prisoner—indeed, as a way of "rehabilitating" him—we are reminded that "reforming an institution like Prison is only possible on the most superficial level. . . . The fact of incarceration is the one thing that can never be removed by reform, . . . and beside this, such considerations as food, cleanliness, recreation, etc.—provided they do not sink to the level where survival itself is endangered—are of distinctly secondary importance." The essential evil, the essential inhumanity, of imprisonment remains, and we must be grateful to the editors and contributors for never letting us forget it.

Because of their anarchist-perfectionist outlook, the editors and most of the contributors tend to miss the full poignancy of the predicament of social life. Granted that the prison is the "most perfect expression of the full implications" of the "state form of society," is social existence conceivable without some form of coercion to keep self-centered men in line with community interest? Indeed, at bottom, is it merely the state or is it society in its bare existence that circumscribes the individuality of the person and thus oppresses him? One of the editors, Dachine Rainer, seems to grasp the fact that the prison is only an "extreme case" of what is involved in social organization as such, even on the most elementary level. Yet having glimpsed this fact, she makes nothing of it, and there is no sign that any of the other contributors possess even this insight.

This unrealism is perhaps associated with what disturbed me most in this book—the imperturbable self-righteousness of most of the writers, their failure to understand that their pacifist choice, however inevitable it may have been for them, was not the choice of absolute right against absolute wrong and did not lift them out of the common involvement in guilt. One of them, Howard Schoenfeld, writes, "We were a proud and stiff-necked lot, who openly boasted we were the most radical men in the country." This "boast" in the end vitiates much of the testimony of these moral perfectionists.

## Survival and Revival

Jewish Survival: Essays and Studies. By Trude Weiss-Rosmarin. The Philosophical Library. 404 pp. $4.00.

*Reviewed by* Ralph Marcus

William James, may his tribe increase, once made a useful distinction between tender-minded and tough-minded thinkers. Unfortunately, he did not, if I remember correctly, find a place for those thinkers who are tender-minded about some aspects of a problem and tough-minded about others. Such an ambivalence is found in the thinking of Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin, whose recent book (the ninth in an indomitable series) is partly a treatise on Orthodox Judaism and partly an apologetic work (which, like most works of this genre, is not at all an apology).

According to the writer of the jacket blurb (which is merely the modern term for the traditional *haskamah*), Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin is learned and brilliant and writes with authority and eloquence. Learned the author is and, at times, brilliant; often she is eloquent, though her eloquence is encumbered by repetition and by an un-English idiom. She does indeed write with authority but her authoritativeness sometimes disturbingly shades off into authoritarianism.

In spite of the variety of subjects treated in the sixteen chapters, the author has pretty well succeeded in grouping the various studies into two convenient wholes (though there is no formal division). The first logical whole is a discussion of the chances of survival of traditional Judaism in the Diaspora. The second part is in intent a survey, in effect a glorification, of the chief theological and ethical doctrines and practices of traditional Judaism.

It is convenient to begin with the second part. Even the most detached and unsentimental reader, if he is at all proud of his Jewish heritage, must admit that the author has done an excellent job in defending a number of propositions, of which the following are representative: The prophets and rabbis were in advance of their times in their exalted conceptions of God and social justice and in their sensible teachings about hygiene, child care, marital compatibility, penology, business ethics, and the like; the Jews have always shown a unique zest for life, a unique appreciation of the intellectual life, and a unique concern for universal brotherhood.

But the same detached and unsentimental reader will probably be troubled, as is the reviewer, by the author's almost complete unwillingness or inability to do justice to the theological and ethical beliefs and practices of Christians and pagans, being in this respect, I think, less Jewish than some of her admired authorities. Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin is aware, as she shows in many passages, that the traditional idea of the Chosen People, rightly understood, is by no means a kind of offensive chauvinism. In one passage she has skillfully outlined the significant difference between the Jewish idea of Israel's special responsibility for the moral improvement of all mankind, on the one hand, and the perverted Nazi idea of a *Herrenvolk,* on the other. But in spite of this awareness and disavowal, the author insistently argues on the implicit assumption that Israel is a lamb and other peoples are wolves.

That the Israelites of the Biblical period and the Jews of the post-Biblical period had a remarkably high standard of belief and conduct no one but an ignorant or prejudiced person would deny. But Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin refuses to admit that any Gentile or Christian nation has ever attained and maintained an ethical standard anywhere near that of the Jews. Her attitude is very much like that of Joshua's when he asked Moses to suppress the unlicensed prophets Eldad and Medad. She is less magnanimous than was Moses when he replied, "Art thou jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them."

IN THE first section of her book, the author shows the same formidable severity toward non-Jews, and even toward non-Orthodox Jews. I cannot recall a single Jewish apologist who takes so much fierce pride in traditional Judaism's indifference to all the arts except literature as does Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin, who insists that "we need not apologize for nor explain the paucity of Jewish art. It is just one more proof of the distinctiveness which is our true *raison d'être.*" Fortunately, the Jews have been considerably more interested in the arts than our iconoclastic author would admit.

When it comes to diagnosing the difficulties of both assimilated and Orthodox Jews in the Western Diaspora, the author often shows considerable insight. Among the reasonable, if sometimes unoriginal and sometimes controversial, conclusions which she draws, the following may be mentioned:

The technological triumphs of the modern age only accentuate its spiritual failures. Judaism is both a national and universal religion. Modern Zionism is not a break with Jewish tradition but is "on the contrary, its only logical continuation." Most Diaspora Jews, including many of the Orthodox, suffer from spiritual malaise because of their inability to belong to two cultures at the same time. Contributions to world science, art, and literature made by Jews are not in themselves Jewish contributions unless suffused by a genuinely Jewish spirit. Jewish survival has been due not to negative causes, such as the pressure of anti-Semitism, but to the Jews' traditional love of life, their optimism and faith in the coming of a Messianic era. In our own country there has been "a terrifying decrease of Jewishness with each successive generation" (this, of course, means a weakening of Orthodox Judaism as the author defines Jewishness).

In much of the above discussion Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin shows undeniable tough-mindedness (which, in the reviewer's opinion, is what is called for at the present time). But when it comes to assessing the future strength of Orthodox Judaism and to proving the desirability of maintaining Jewish distinctiveness in the degree prescribed, she seems to be just as undeniably tender-minded, not to say evasive and confused.

Before she can successfully defend Orthodoxy against all comers, Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin will have to eliminate certain contradictions in her thinking and outline more concrete ways of strengthening the form of Judaism which she regards as authentic. For instance, why does she in one place (page 54) insist that "there is no eternity for Jewish cultural and literary expression except in Hebrew," and in another place (page 178) point out with the emphasis of italics that "some of the most important classics of the 'Golden Age' of Hebrew literature were not written in Hebrew but in *Arabic*"? If these classics were thought worthy of translation into Hebrew they must have been thoroughly Jewish in the original language, and there is no proof that they are less deserving of "eternity" as Arabic (or as Greek or English or Yiddish) originals than as Hebrew translations.

Dr. Weiss-Rosmarin has written as powerful an apologetic for modern Orthodox Judaism as has appeared in recent years. But it is very doubtful that the kind of Orthodoxy she so ardently champions will survive in the Western Diaspora. It seems more probable that most Diaspora Jews, including those interested in survival as Jews, will see greater virtue in trying to integrate themselves with their non-Jewish environment and in the process will be willing to give up much of what the author regards as their Jewish distinctiveness. For some (including myself), this may be grounds for pessimism, but it would be well not to have illusions about it.

## A Modern Idol Under Fire

SCIENCE IS A SACRED COW. By ANTHONY STANDEN. Dutton. 221 pp. $2.75.

*Reviewed by* NATHAN GLAZER

FROM a distance, science looks as a whole like the secure, foolproof, intelligent, and eminently successful enterprise that it is only in part. Up close one discovers that the uncertainty characteristic of our life here below has not left it untouched, even on its highest reaches. And when we get to such a fundamental question as what science *is*, things really become confusing. In despair, some authorities have decided that science is anything that is produced as a result of the application of the "scientific method"; others, that it is anything a scientist does in his field; others, anything that "works."

In all this, one thing is certain: science is not simply the rigorous antiseptic procedure described in books on science and scientific method and which, a number of writers tell us, would drastically improve our lives if it were applied to the problems of war, poverty, happiness, and so on.

The virtue of *Science Is a Sacred Cow*—outside of the fact that it is witty and entertaining—is that the author knows this simple and sanctimonious view of the value of science will not hold up. His first two chapters form an excellent polemical essay on scientific education—what is claimed for it, what it actually is, and even a hint as to what it should be. Mr. Standen, speaking with a perfectly clear-eyed view of scientists, professors, textbook writers, college presidents, and students, points out that the major claim for science in education is that it will make students intelligent, objective, unprejudiced, and good citizens—in short will spread, by contagion or osmosis, "scientific qualities of mind." Yet these qualities of mind only rarely characterize science teachers, scientific texts, or scientists; at any rate, not more so than any group of competent, honest, and intelligent workmen.

Any science course consists of technical education in practical procedures in various fields. If it is very good, it may also teach some of the basic theory behind these procedures. Yet the theory is generally accepted by the students—if they understand it at all—on faith. Science courses, at their best, will make good physicists and biologists, but there is nothing in scientific education as such which makes of a good physicist or biologist a good man—that is, a man with the virtues of intelligence, objectivity, and all the rest. These have to be approached directly, not through the teaching of science.

This does not mean that scientific education is not terribly important: we all depend on science for the practical and technical operations of running our civilization. But to believe that the study of the most practical way of handling electricity, or of the workings of the atom bomb, will lead to proper qualities of mind *per se*, is, Mr. Standen thinks, completely illegitimate. Mr. Standen also asserts that the survey course in science, which, by less devotion to details and more to principles, presumably leaves a useful residue of a generally applicable "scientific attitude of mind," will do nothing of the kind; it will not even make good scientists. As someone who has taken these courses, the reviewer is in full agreement.

THE rest of the book consists of chapters on physics, biology, psychology, and the social sciences, in which the author examines these fields with a view to determining the degree to which they approach the ideal conception of science. (A. W. N. Sullivan, in a 35-cent Mentor book, *The Limitations of Science*, went through the same sciences in the same order, and on a rather deeper level: the two books supplement each other wonderfully.) Mr. Standen points out that only physics is capable of rigorously deriving its facts from a small group of tested hypotheses; that in biology, laws are based on something akin to aesthetic analogies; that psychology never gets around to the important questions (unless, like Freud, it becomes "unscientific"); and that the social sciences more often than not use the technical language of science to dress up the ordinary operations of scholarly investigation.

The chapter on mathematics is rather more questionable. Mr. Standen asserts that mathematics is "true science," because it alone leads to known truth rather than probable opinion. However, one might counter that this is because it alone is not bound by any contact with empirical reality. He also manages to drag in God at the end of this chapter, when he belatedly adds to the possible values of scientific education (particularly the mathematical part of it) the idea that it teaches us about God and his handiwork. I prefer his formulation in the first two chapters.

His last chapter, "Watch Those Scientists," reviews the areas where we have to be careful of the scientists. Besides the atom bomb—concerning which Mr. Standen has nothing to suggest—there are truth drugs, lie detectors, polls, and a variety of other discoveries and activities which can be perverted to inhuman ends. It would have been just to point out that we have to watch everyone else, particularly governments, at least as much as scientists; but no one could quarrel with Mr. Standen's general conclusion that we ought to regard the pretensions of scientists with skepticism and humor.

Mr. Standen studied chemistry and engineering at Oxford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and taught for a number of years at St. John's, the "hundred-great-books" college. This book might be regarded as one of a number of recent volumes which have deprecated science and the modern world and advocated some kind of return to religion and ancient wisdom. Yet even if one rejects this general point of view, this individual book, because it limits itself to one sphere, and one with which the writer is well acquainted, and because it concentrates on destructive criticism rather than positive proposals, will be found stimulating.

One might argue with Mr. Standen's style. He writes in a down-to-earth fashion, as if saying, I'm just an ordinary Joe, but anyone with plain common sense can show these guys up. But inside this apparently crude and hairy hand is a finely constructed skeleton, created by a solid grounding in ideas. Mr. Standen does not let the ideas and thinkers that have influenced him show through, as if afraid of frightening off his less educated readers. This is a trick that *Time* magazine often uses—making use of the intellectual's heritage without exposing oneself as an intellectual, and it is questionable whether it is legitimate, even if the self-exposure might interfere with one's educational purposes.

## Book Reviewers in This Issue

Daniel Bell, a frequent contributor to Commentary, is labor editor of *Fortune*.

Stephen Spender is now back in England after a stay in this country.

Karl Polanyi is visiting professor of economics at Columbia University.

Will Herberg has written and lectured widely on Judaism and contemporary social thought.

Ralph Marcus is professor of Hellenistic culture at the University of Chicago.

Nathan Glazer is an assistant editor of Commentary.

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COMMENTARY
is printed by
THE COMET PRESS, INC.
200 Varick Street, New York 14, N. Y.
WAtkins 4-6700
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